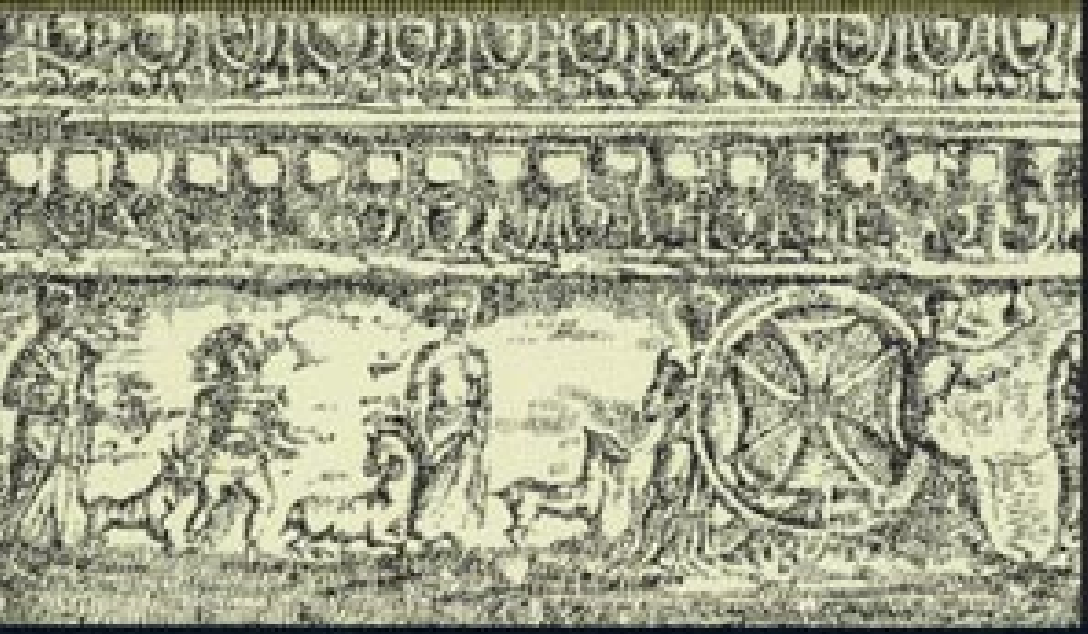
The Classical Moment

Views from Seven Literatures

Edited by Gail Holst-Warhaft and David R. McCann



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Introduction

The idea of a "classical moment" is something that begs, in this age, to be undone. It reeks of elitism, of fixed canons, of the romantic worship of an idealized past. "Classical" is doomed by its relation to "class," "moment," by its temporal and cultural claim to uniqueness. In an age perhaps unparalleled in its willingness to question its own bases of legitimacy, its prejudices, and its canons, the idea of a single "classical moment" that defined our culture was bound to come under scrutiny. What is more surprising is how tenaciously it has been defended. In the Western world, the "classical" implies Greece and Rome. Most prestigious universities continue to label departments of Greek and Latin "classics departments," and despite broadside and more subtle attacks on the implications of the term there have been equally adamant demands for the preservation of the privileged status of Greek and Roman literature, philosophy, and language as the underpinnings of our culture.

In gathering scholars together whose work concentrates on literatures other than Greek and Roman, and asking them to discuss the "classical moment" as it applied to the cultures they studied, we set out neither to undermine nor to uphold the notion of a "classical moment." We were interested in discovering whether such moments do appear in other cultures and, if so, how they become enshrined in the cultural memory of a society, what effect they have on preceding as well as subsequent literary and artistic creations.

The idea for this gathering of moments grew from a course we taught together at Cornell University called "Hidden Songs in Greece and Asia." The course began with readings in the Chinese *Book of Odes,* ancient Greek tragedy, and vernacular (Korean) and classical (Chinese) language narratives in premodern Korean literature. We discussed these readings in terms of a series of contrasts such as state and society, folk and elite literature, and male and female roles in society. We noticed patterns of concealing and enhancing in the transition from orality to literacy and saw how groups that had been significant in an oral tradition were obscured or submerged in written literary culture.

We were led to consider the idea of "classical" literature in new ways and to discover surprising numbers of common threads in the Asian and Greek

material. One was that the line dividing "folk" song and "high" literature is something that bends and gives, in both the Greek and the Chinese material. As Paul Rouzer describes in his chapter on the Chinese *Book of Odes,* what rests in the canon as an anthology of folk songs was very likely from the outset a mixture of elite and folk materials. The notion that the government could use the collection of songs from various parts of the country as a measure of popular approval or discontent and adjust its policies accordingly was one that the literati used to their benefit. The assumption of an anonymous folk identity granted them a sort of diplomatic invisibility and allowed them to criticize the government with impunity. Perhaps the belief that there is a "folk," a broader mass of people, different from the elite but preserving within it some essential spirit of the nation's origin, is a precondition for the creation of a "classical" work of literature. At least it appears, in many of the world's literatures, that songs, like the Chinese *Book of Odes* or the Homeric poems, are refinements of or conscious reworkings of a more popular form of artistic creation.

The decision to treat a certain body of literature as set apart, as superior in some cases, seems to be a conscious act of exclusion. Writing may be the tool for exclusion, or a development of a "literary" language, as in the case of India. How often was this tied to political events such as the consolidation of a dynasty like the Han in China? With the bolstering of a city, a ruler, a province? Was the assertion of the Yamato in Japan intimately tied to the establishment of a classical literary moment, as Lamarre suggests? And can we see, in the colonial "invention" of a classical literary masterpiece for Vietnam, a model for arbitrarily imposed classical moments in earlier societies where the blatant interference of the authorities has been dimmed by centuries of reverence?

Whatever the local peculiarities, there does seem to be, in all the literary "moments" considered in this volume, a sense of dichotomy, whether between an earlier age and the present as in the case of China and Greece (Rouzer, Holst-Warhaft) or between the particular and the universal as in the Choson Korea dynastic foundation hymn (McCann) and Heian Japanese aesthetics (Lamarre); between the country and the city as in the revival of Sanskrit (Jamison) or perhaps, most broadly, between literature and history in Mesopotamia (Hallo). Around such constructions of difference, the classical moment seems to have been defined.

Despite attempts to broaden curricula, the talk of multidisciplinary courses and multicultural societies, no one has tried to look at the "classical moment" across languages and cultures to see whether some of its effects and presuppositions are similar, or whether the case of fifth-century Athens was singular

in its dominance over Western European culture. We made no attempt to define the concept of the "classical" beyond the literature with which we were familiar. Instead we encouraged the scholars who participated in this project to reveal their own and sometimes a culture's complicated relationship to the classical. In a group of essays on the subject of the "classical moment" in literatures as far away as that of ancient Babylonia and the Heian dynasty of Japan, what is striking is the unwillingness of scholars to accept the term as a simple measure of literary worth. We share with the scholars who have contributed to this volume a sense of impatience with the enterprise of "classicizing" a body of literature, but we find the process by which societies arrive at their "classical moments" and the effects of such moments on subsequent literary production a fascinating comparative study.

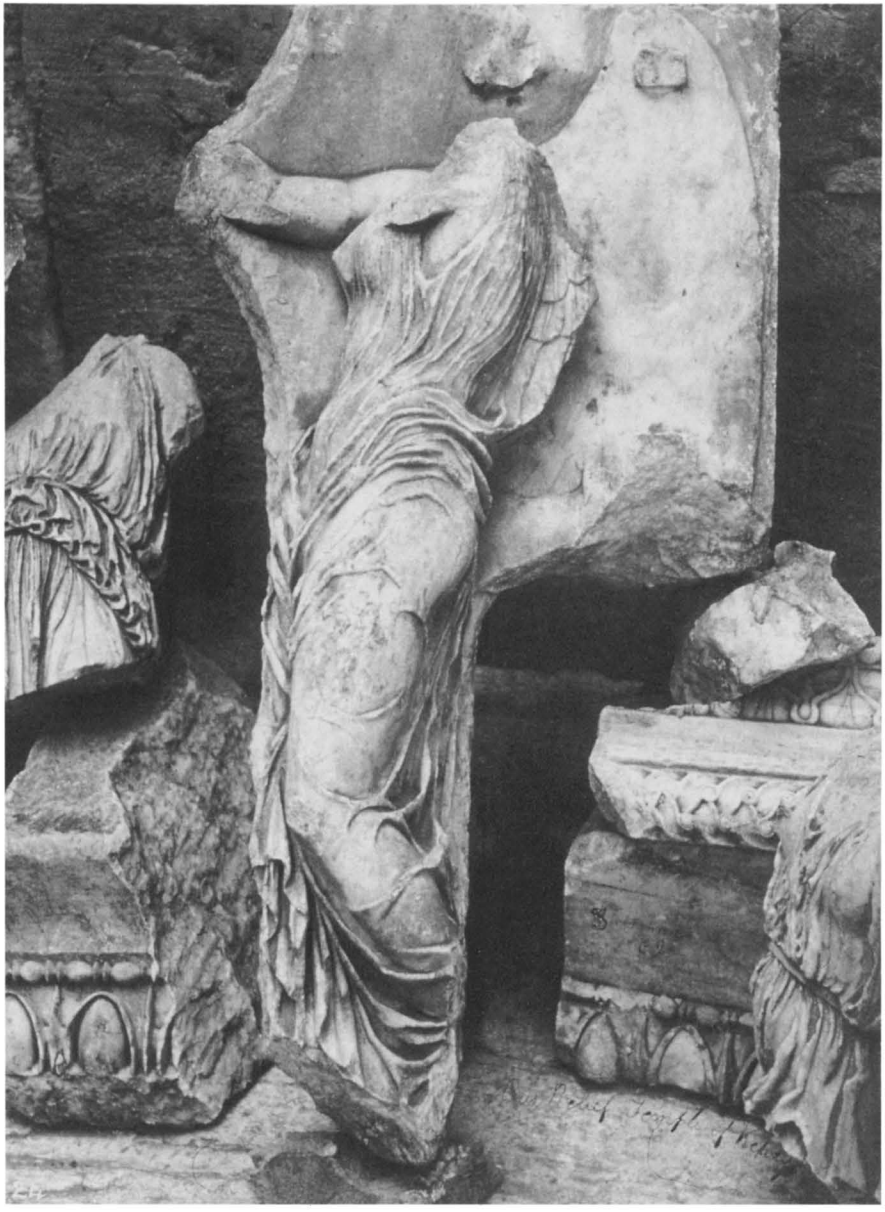


Figure of Victory from the Temple of Victory. Photograph by William J. Stillman, 1989.

CHAPTER ONE

The Wake of the Greek Classical Moment

Gail Holst-Warhaft

For other cultures, the question of a classical moment may be debated, even irrelevant. For Greece, there has been general agreement in Western European thought, even among those who would extend its boundaries or shake its foundations, that the fifth century was unique. Here I am not concerned to dispute the uniqueness of the achievements of that century, but to consider what is involved in defining a span of fifty, a hundred, even a thousand years of history as if the motion picture of cultural evolution were frozen on a frame and all the sequences leading up to it and following it would always be judged in terms of that single, perfect image. Perhaps one of the advantages of having defined such an image is its tidiness. Ordering is implicit in the word "classical," as is judgement.[1] It may be that we have inherited, among many other things Greek, our anxiety about disorder, about the formlessness of chaos. Defining a period as brief, discrete, and superior makes things clearer, simpler, including the education of future generations. But to what extent is the classical moment an outside invention, designed to confine, and to what extent is it an internal act of cultural exclusion, the promotion of one cultural model over another? Did Greek and Roman fascination with judging and classifying their own achievements leave us with a biased sample of a larger, more variegated cultural output? What is left out of the "classical"? Does the self-defined and posthumously admired "moment" entail the silencing of those heterogeneous and dissenting voices that do not fit its imagined character?

These are large questions, I realize, and ones that many scholars have addressed in recent years, but it might be helpful to step back a few decades and look at the term "classical moment" when it could still be used unselfconsciously. After looking at that "moment" and considering the issues involved in its construction, I will consider its effect on subsequent Greek and European culture, and finally on the formation of a modern Greek literary identity.

J. J. Pollitt's *Art and Experience in Classical Greece*, published in 1972, contains a chapter entitled "The World Under Control: The Classical Moment, c. 450-430 B.C." Pollitt's "moment" is set within a larger classical period (c. 480-323 B.C.), suggesting that the twenty-year cultural peak may be unique but stands in an impressive range.[2] Beyond and below lie the foothills of the

Archaic period on one side and the Hellenistic period on the other before "the lone and level lands stretch far away." For Pollitt, the Greeks were responsible for their own definition of a moment. The period was not simply one of political consolidation or of philosophical concentration on the affairs of man, but rather "a will to believe and spokesmen to articulate that will. The Great Believers and also the spokesmen were Pericles . . . and the artists like Pheidias and Sophocles who helped to make the Periclean vision real by giving it a witnessable form" (1971: 64).

The glorification of Athens, in Pollitt's eyes, was a deliberate project, and its achievements were intended to be admired by contemporaries and future generations. The power of Sparta was just as impressive, but as Thucydides (I.x.2) remarked, there would be little to show for it if Sparta were overcome, "but if the same misfortune were to overtake Athens, the power of the city, from its visible remains, would seem to have been twice as great as it is." Public building on a grand scale has always been a bid for the "classical," an enduring form of window-dressing that often gives little idea of the life of a city. (Imagine taking the calm exteriors of Georgian terraces as a mirror of eighteenth-century London life.) In the case of Athens, however, building and, more importantly, town planning, reflect not only the power of the city, but the new basis of its social and political authority. The organization of the city is around the agora, or public meeting place, and an acropolis occupied not by a royal palace but temples open to public worship. As Jean-Pierre Vernant notes,[3] the creation of this new social space marked a new attitude to power. The private and the personal aspects of power were rejected. Important decisions were now to be brought *es to koinon*, or "to the commons," where they would be debated around a *hestia koine*. The hearth that was a symbol of the center of private family life and family worship was replaced by a symbolic communal hearth where problems of common concern to the citizens were debated.

Closely tied to the new town planning and even more important are the words. To quote Vernant again: "The system of the *polis* implied, first of all, the extraordinary preeminence of speech over all other instruments of power. Speech became the political tool par excellence, the key to all authority in the state, the means of commanding and dominating others. . . . The art of politics became essentially the management of language; and *logos* from the beginning took on an awareness of itself, of its rules and its effectiveness, through its political function" (1982:49-50). Writing was another form of the management of language, one essential for the external if not the internal perception of the "classical." A line of Thucydides gives Sparta posthumous

visibility, while reminding us of Athens's superior cultural achievements. The writing of history, like the rebuilding of the Parthenon in stone, is part of what might better be called a "classicizing process," one in which the importance of witnessing is tied to competition and judgment. The great dramatic festivals, the establishment of the Olympic Games, the recitation of Homeric poetry, and performances of music were all both competitive and public. The idea of public performance lay at the heart of the new city state. Selection, classification, and canonization were institutionalized by the *polis* as a means of self-assertion. But while they enhanced the reputation of the particular *polis* of Athens, they were also part of the broader process of Panhellenization.[4]

As Nagy (1990: 61) has persuasively argued, the concept of *krisis*, or the weeding out of what is "best", is also the weeding out of variants; it means the establishing of a fixed form of a myth, a song, or a poem, one that is intelligible to audiences in various parts of Greece.[5] The selection of the particular as representative of the whole, of the broadly comprehensible over the locally colored, is a means of ensuring that these works will not to be consigned to oblivion (*lethe*) but will enjoy *aletheia*, or the remembrance that confers legitimacy or truth. What endures for the so-called classical Greek culture is what has been selected, over a period of time, to satisfy the taste of a broad enough audience, a public.

The notion of the public, of the importance of approval and consent, is closely related to a number of qualities that seem to mark the development of Panhellenism and become enshrined in the fifth century "moment." These qualities—or, perhaps more correctly, preferences, since they are what have been culled from a wider and deeper stream—are what fifth-century B.C. Athens, at least before the plague begins, synthesizes. And nowhere in the city are the interrelated processes of public involvement, judgment and Panhellenization seen to better advantage than in the great theatrical festivals of Athens. In the theater of Dionysos, just as in the *agora* or the *ekklesia*, hierarchy is temporarily suspended, and an apparent equality of the citizens prevails.[6] The public is not merely an assemblage of passive spectators, but is involved in the performance by its participation in the citizen chorus. Musically educated, the Athenian public increasingly demands excellence in performance, an excellence achieved by the ordering of words, music, and movement independent of any local, cultic, or ritual significance. The virtuoso musician or poet becomes a self-conscious manipulator of *nomoi* and *harmonia*, of individual local modes into an interrelated system.[7]

For the Greeks of the fifth century, musical ordering by the judicious mixing of elements was conceived of as not only an aesthetic synthesis, but a

philosophical, ethical, and political one. The Pythagorean philosopher Philolaos (44B10) defined *harmonia* as a union of things that are much mixed but also as "an agreement amongst those who have been at odds in their thinking." Peter Murphy[8] suggests that "the mixing of *nomoi* (in the city center) was a key experience of *polis* life and a condition of the emergence of that immortal Greek invention: politics." Good music, for Plato (and here he is looking nostalgically back to an earlier period), imitated the beautifully constituted character.[9] The musical metaphors of the philosophers tell us very little about musical practice. But they tell us a great deal about what the most influential of Greek philosophers considered to be the sources of the qualities they valued, of order, restraint, bravery, prudence. The qualities Plato demands of his ideal citizens are to be found and communicated through a defined body of music and poetry from a preceding age, that is, the classics. The nostalgic vision of the art of a preceding age as superior to the contemporary and capable of imbuing the youth of one's own age with corresponding moral qualities is a common feature of classicizing moments.[10] It is a philosophical viewpoint that has had remarkably persistent and far-reaching consequences. As recently as the beginning of the twentieth century, a degree in Greek and Latin was, after all, considered ideal preparation for an English gentleman setting off to rule a swathe of India or Malaya.

One consequence of the belief in the didactic benefits of contemplating selected works from the past that have been judged classical is that it dismisses the contemporary, dynamic and fluid in favor of the fixed and immutable. The canon becomes the authoritative standard against which new works are judged and inevitably found wanting. Age becomes a virtue in itself. As Piotr Michalowski notes in relation to Sumerian texts, "Antiquity has often been mistaken for authority, and Sumerian literary texts are usually treated as sources for the reconstruction of a static but noble mythology and world view."[11]

The second consequence of the use of the retrospectively designated canon as a didactic tool is that it presupposes a close congruity between politics and art. Like the disciples of Confucius, Plato diagnoses the disorders of Athens in terms of changes in music, in particular to the mixing of modes, styles, instrumentation, tunings, intervals, rhythms.[12] For Aristotle, the increasing professionalism of musical performance was a sign of the spiritual excesses of prewar Athenian pride. However metaphorical the philosophers' use of musical terminology may be, we are left with the impression that changes in the forms of art not only reflect political change but are responsible for moral decline. The rhetoric of contemporary debates about the literary canon sug-

gests we are still under the influence of the Platonic equation of moral turpitude with hybridization and innovation.

Another problem of the classicizing of the art of the past is that the process of selecting a period and its cultural products as excellent and morally improving has the effect not only of distorting those products themselves, excluding what does not fit the overall image of its perfection, but of dimming the art that surrounds them. It creates a historical picture of art like the impression you have when walking from one lit house to another in the dark. For a short time after leaving a house you walk in the range of its illumination, then you are plunged into blackness until you enter the glow emanating from the next house. In terms of the art of classical Greece, can we judge, from this distance, what has been distorted? What thrown into shadow? Are the few surviving plays enough to give us a picture of what classical tragedy was like? How can we reconstruct, from the words of a Euripidean chorus, the bending and distortion of musical modes that Aristophanes objected to so strongly in the *Frogs* ? And without its music, can we "read" a theatrical work that may have been closer to an opera than a play?

What has been saved of Greek tragedy, besides the words, is its physical setting. Sitting and watching a production of *Oedipus* in the ancient theater of Epidaurus or in the Herod Atticus Theater on the side of the Athenian acropolis next to the ruins of the theater of Dionysos is an entirely different experience from reading the play or watching it in an enclosed theater. You are reminded that a huge audience was present. The theater of Dionysos held as many as ten thousand people. It was wide open to sun and rain. It was also part of a complex of buildings that were within a stone's throw of one another and formed the religious and political heart of the city. The political, judicial, religious, commercial, and artistic were physically adjacent. The proximity of the theater on the side of the acropolis and the site of the Assembly on the Pnyx is a reminder of the parallels that existed between the two. Open, facing the sun, both had similar seating arrangements. In both cases, elite composers and performers of elite discourse presented a mass audience with a dialogue that raised issues of concern to the society of the *polis*. Vernant has argued that the interest of the public was part of the representativeness of the state. In both cases there was a lively participation of the audience with the speakers and actors.[13] The analogy can be extended to the Athenian courts of law, which, like the theater and the assembly, were public arenas that involved large numbers of the Athenian population not only as spectators but as participants. Up to six thousand men were known to have acted as jurors in a single trial in the year 415.[14] Women and children were often brought to these great open-air

trials in order to influence the outcome. A speaker at such a trial acted as his own witness and called on others to support him: " like a speaker in the assembly, [he] spoke in his own voice to persuade his fellow citizens of his own integrity, of his connections with powerful and respected people, of his devotion to the city and her laws."[15]

The texts of political speeches, trial speeches, and the surviving dramas suggest that the relationship was a much deeper one than the superficial arrangement and composition of the audience. Tragedy provided a reservoir of mythical and cultural paradigms on which the public orator or defendant could draw. And despite the distancing in time and place, tragedy addressed a variety of contemporary Athenian problems, often borrowing the political and legal rhetoric of the day.[16]

Given the close association among politics, law, and the classical theater, it is not surprising that the theme of conflict dominates tragedy. What is more unexpected is that it is full of qualities kept at arm's length in the other public forums: terror and madness. Page duBois notes that the evidence obtained from slaves under torture was a common feature of Athenian trials but that it was presented by the torturer, not the victim.[17] In this context, "the evidence from the torture of slaves is evidence from elsewhere, from another place, another body. It is evidence from outside the community of citizens, of free men." From behind the masks of the theater, we also hear voices that come from another place, voices of women, slaves, gods, voices that appear to speak for those who are not represented in the *logos* of public debate. In the multiple voices of tragedy and comedy, not only do we hear debate and opposition to the prevailing ideals of Athens, but we are exposed to a world where violence, madness, and terror threaten the stability of cities and where Greek men are portrayed as arrogant and ignoble in the face of powerful female adversaries.

Where do these powerful figures come from that dominate the Athenian stage in the classical period? Do they represent Athenian reality in any sense? By arguing that the stage is an extension of the agora, the law courts, and the assembly, we are in danger of forgetting that while the political and civic debates exclude women, the debate on the stage *includes* women. It can be countered that male playwrights and actors put the words into their mouths, but that they should be represented arguing as equals with men and often triumphing over male adversaries precludes any description of the tragedies as a mirror of public debate. Indeed the contrast between the real position of women in Athenian society and the texts of the surviving tragedies has sug-

gested to feminist critics such as Froma Zeitlin that the facade of self-confident Athenian democracy may be deeply fissured.[18]

But tragedy's representation of women, like its representation of madness and destruction, may also be viewed as a calculated risk in the political life of the city. The theater is, after all, a state-sanctioned spectacle.[19] When we see a modern production of tragedy, performed without masks, with the complex meters of Greek usually translated into prose, and above all without music, we have the impression of a violent, unpredictable universe. We forget that choreographed movement, stylized masks, and metrical and melodic form imposed a degree of order on the chaos of emotion. Tragedy may have opened a window on the darker side of Greek thought, providing a temporary catharsis, but at least in its initial phase, it carefully framed its images in the accepted conventions of restraint. Death and violence, like the torturing of slaves to produce reliable evidence in the law courts, were kept off stage. Revelation and observation were dressed in forms that the audience knew and judged, if we can rely on Aristophanes, Plato or Aristotle, in terms of musical style and expertise, as well as content.

If it is the apparently irrational and dark quality of tragedy that, from Nietzsche on, has helped make it attractive to modern sensibility, it is also what made tragedy such an important topic for later Greek philosophers. Greek tragedy is bequeathed to the modern age as a problem as well as an incomparable achievement. Plato and Aristotle were, we could say, the first theorists of the "classical moment."[20] Both saw the dangers inherent even in the controlled exposure of an audience to the *mimesis* of tragic theater. If Aristotle is more positive in his view of tragedy, he must develop the theoretical argument of catharsis, of a sort of group therapy or emotional safety valve, in order to counter Plato's criticism of tragic theater as unsuitable for building moral character. Plato's main argument against tragic poetry and drama is that by presenting open displays of grief, it encourages men to behave in an uncontrolled, unmanly way (*Rep.*10:605c-607a). For Aristotle, tragedy is most effective when it produces that degree of emotion he deems therapeutic release (*Poetics* chs. 6,13). Despite their differences, the two philosophers treat tragedy as if it were a single genre with its own acceptable norms and unacceptable deviations. It is through the filter of philosophic theory that later ages will view the plays of antiquity as obeying some abstract norm. The heart of the classicizing process may be exactly this. If Aristotle can say that Euripides is the "most tragic" of the three tragedians of the fifth century (*Poetics* ch. 13:135a), then tragedy already exists as an idealized abstraction. The classi-

cal moment, as it is inherited and reinterpreted by successive generations, is above all this philosophical abstraction.

Classical Attitudes

> One is no longer at home anywhere, so in the end one longs to be back where one can somehow *be* at home because it is the only place where one would *wish* to be at home: and that is the world of Greece.
>
> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* [21]

> Walking back [from the ruins of Knossos] to meet the bus, I stopped at a little village to get a drink. The contrast between the past and present was tremendous, as though the secret of life had been lost. The men who gathered around me took on the appearance of uncouth savages. They were friendly and hospitable, extraordinarily so, but by comparison with Minoans they were like neglected domestic animals.
>
> Henry Miller, *The Colossus of Maroussi*, 122

I have suggested that the classicizing process, particularly in regard to literature, was something already begun by the Greeks of the classical period and continued by the philosophers of the fourth century. The establishing of a literary canon, the nostalgic references to the art of the past as superior, and the equation of moral rectitude with aesthetics may all have been bequeathed to us by the Greeks themselves, but we cannot blame the ancient Greeks for becoming a fantastic paradigm, a dream that neither Western Europeans nor the modern inhabitants of the land of Greece could possibly measure up to. For Greece, the existence of the abstract ideal of the classical moment has been a particular burden as well as a boon. Before I turn to the nature of that burden, it is perhaps necessary to summarize very briefly the history of the Philhellenic. To understand the peculiar mixture of reverence and distortion that marked the attitude of Western Europe toward Greece, particularly during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, we must begin with the Greeks of the Hellenistic diaspora.

It was during the Hellenistic period that the Greeks of the diaspora began the process of classicizing the art and language of fifth-century Attica. In cities such as Alexandria and Antioch, where the spoken language was Greek, the literature of fifth-century Athens, together with its own favorite "classics," the Homeric poems, became the basis not only of elaborate grammatical and rhetorical studies, but of an archaizing form of spoken Greek. The idealized

view of the fifth century held by the Greeks in exile was in turn inherited by the Romans, and there began the long tale of literal and figurative appropriations of classical Greece by the West. First came a series of Greek defeats and plundering of Greek art. Victorious Roman generals of the second and first centuries B.C., such as M. Acilius Glabrio, L. Mummius, and L. Cornelius Sulla, all brought back shiploads of treasure to Rome. So great was the demand for "classical" marble statues that there seems to have been a flourishing business in reproductions that were shipped from Greece to Italy.[22] Julius Caesar, Pliny, Novius Vindex, and the emperor Nero were among the most avid collectors of Greek art in Rome. Nero took five hundred statues from Delphi alone, and countless works of art from the Greek cities of the East. From the ruins of his villa at Antium came three of the works of art that were to become models of the classical ideal for future centuries: the Apollo Belvedere, the Borghese Gladiator, and the Venus with the Beautiful Backside.[23] As Richard Stoneman notes, "possession of Greek art, original or copy, [by wealthy Romans of the Republic was] a matter for praise or self-praise"(1987: 9).

Constantine's conversion to Christianity did not prevent him from adorning his eastern capital with works of pagan art, most of them from fifth- and fourth-century Greece. The emperors who followed him added to Constantine's collection until Byzantium became so heavy with treasures from the past that in April 1204, when the city was sacked by the Christians of the Fourth Crusade, the rampage could be described as "the largest single destruction of antique art the world had ever seen."[24] The supreme value placed on the art of the Greek past included a carefully circumscribed reverence for ancient language and philosophy. Indeed, despite the distaste of the Byzantine Church for "Hellenism" in the form of a philosophical movement, advancement to the higher offices in the Byzantine state demanded a "classical" education.[25] The form this education took is interesting given the later development of "the classics." Essentially it was the study of grammar, syntax, and rhetoric, of philology rather than literature. There was no interest in or idealism of the political or philosophical ideas of fifth-century Athens, nor was there any importance attached to its contemporary inhabitants.[26] The interest in philology and the interest in collecting Greek art were to remain the two central preoccupations of Greek classical studies for centuries to follow.

As the Byzantine Empire came under threat from the advancing Turks and help from the Latin west was made conditional on the recognition of the pope's supreme authority, the desperate cultured elite of Constantinople laid claim to a new source of authority. It was one that was to have enormous cultural and political consequences. In the first half of the fifteenth century, a

group of so-called *Hellizontes* began to boast of a "Hellenic"—as distinct from a Hellenistic or Roman—heritage. This heritage was tied to a specific territory. The inhabitants of the Peloponnese were, they declared, the direct descendants of the ancient Hellenes and should, by virtue of their great heritage, establish a nation-state there. In a memorandum to Emperor Manuel II, the most prominent of the Hellenizers, George Gemistos Pletho, outlined his plan for a new "Hellenic" state:

> We over whom you rule and hold sway are Hellenes by race, as is demonstrated by our language and ancestral education. And for Hellenes there is no more proper and peculiar land to be found than the Peloponnese, together with the neighboring part of Europe and the islands that lie near to it. For it appears that this land has always been inhabited by the same Hellenes, as far as the memory of man reaches back: none lived here before them, nor have immigrants occupied it and expelled the others. . . . No, on the contrary, the Hellenes themselves appear always to have been its possessors, and never to have left it. [27]

The language of Pletho's memorandum is remarkably close to that used by the leaders of the movement for Greek independence in the nineteenth century as they tried to win foreign support. It had little immediate effect, partly because of the fall of Constantinople and more importantly because it represented the ideas of a small group of intellectuals who could not appeal to an international audience ripe for such rhetoric. When, four centuries later, the conditions were favorable for the Greeks to rally support for a nationalist movement, they would return to precisely the same rhetoric of a direct and unbroken continuity with their illustrious ancestors.

After the fall of Constantinople to the Turks, some of the less tangible treasures of the Greek classical past made their way back to Italy. Most of the Greek inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire who sought a higher education attended the University of Padua. The treasure they carried with them to Italy took the form of original Greek manuscripts. During the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Aristotle was studied in Greek for the first time in the West. But the arrival of Greek manuscripts in Italy during the Renaissance was still not a cause for the idealization of the ancient Greeks as people nor of the physical site they had occupied. Greek "classics" were still read as models for the study of grammar and rhetoric. Versed as they were in the classics of the Roman world, Renaissance Italian scholars absorbed from the Latin authors they admired a deep prejudice against the character of the Greeks. At the same time, like the Romans, they idealized the artistic products of Greece. [28]

Padua had been occupied by the Venetians since 1405. Crete, Chios, and the Ionian Islands were also in the hands of the Venetians. Venetian Padua became the intellectual center of the Greek world. In a curious two-way process of intellectual exchange, not only did Greeks travel west to learn and teach, but Greek schools were opened on the Venetian-occupied islands, and secular humanism inspired by neo-Aristotelian philosophy found its way back into the Greek-speaking world. The most surprising example of the export in neoclassicism was surely the revival, in the 16th century, of the Academy of the Patriarchate at Constantinople, under the directorship of a series of graduates from Padua. With the appointment in 1624 of the Padua-educated Theophyllos Corydaleus as director, the neo-Aristotelian ideas of the West were adopted as the basis for all Greek higher education. As Campbell and Sherrard note:

> Corydaleus became the leading agent of western thought and culture in the Greek East, and perhaps more than any other individual was influential in reforging the intellectual links between the two halves of Europe.[29]

The to-ing and fro-ing of Greek "classics" from east to west and west to east can be looked on as a sort of commerce in antique treasure, a looting of the resources of the past in order to glorify the present. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the trade increased, but the goods remained essentially the same. As travelers from Western Europe, particularly from France and England, began to include Greece as part of the grand tour, the collecting of physical remains of the ancient inhabitants of Greece developed into an industry so large that nothing would satisfy its rapacity save the marbles of the Athenian acropolis. Concurrently, the establishment of the study of Classics in England and of *Altertumswissenschaft* in Germany enshrined the study of classical philology as the route to an ideal form of knowledge that transcended history.[30] Philhellenism, in its Romantic heyday, would unite the two strands of physical collection and intellectual possession of the classics. It was, as one observer remarked, a not altogether surprising conjunction: "That the egocentric traveller and the dispassionate philologist engage in kindred obsessions should come as no surprise; together, after all, they constitute the discursive practices of Orientalism." (Gourgouris 1996:131).

The impact of the western European idealization of the "classical moment" on almost every aspect of modern Greek life, from politics to poetry, city planning to tourism, has been so enormous that it is impossible to imagine Greece in the 19th century as a minor province of the Ottoman Empire or

in the twentieth as another small Balkan country. From its War of Independence against the Turks to its bid to enter the European Common Market, Greece has enjoyed a privileged status. It is a privilege that Greeks learned to exploit to their advantage, but never to control. The eighteenth century enthusiasm for Homer, a fever that began in France with the publication of Fenelon's *Telemaque* and continued in England with Alexander Pope's translations of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, had shifted the focus of European fascination with Greece. Homer was seen to combine truth to nature with what Pope called a "an unequal'd fire and rapture." Winckelmann's writings on Greek sculpture were to have a similar impact to the revival of Homer on the reappraisal of classical art.[31] In his *History of Greek Art*, published in 1764, Roman copies were seen, for the first time, to be be poor imitations of original Greek statues. What made the Greek works superior was their fidelity to nature. Under the influence of Winckelmann's reappraisal and the new reverence for Homer, Goethe would pursue his dream of ancient Greeks for the rest of his life.

The effect of the eighteenth-century reappraisal of Greek art and architecture, the interest in Homer as a poet of nature, and the passion for collecting antiquities was to make travel to Greece a desirable addition to an aristocratic European education. French travelers were responsible for the first wave of Romantic travel literature that linked ancient and modern Greece. However much the Enlightenment thinkers had been "nostalgic" for a lost Hellenic home, they were ambivalent and divided in their attitude toward Greece.[32] On the one hand, they saw the present inhabitants of Greece as debased descendants of glorious ancestors. On the other, the occupation of Greece by Turks was offensive because it violated their own cultural patrimony. Voltaire was typical in expressing a passionate desire that "the barbarous Turks be chased at once from the country of Xenophon, Sophocles, Plato."[33] During the last decades of the eighteenth century, a series of French travelers visited Greece. What attracted them was the desire to see the classical landscape still dotted with the physical remains of antiquity and to search, in the present inhabitants, for some traces of their great inheritance.[34] The travelers arrived with a vision so clearly defined by their classical education, that they frequently speak of a sensation of déjà vu, as if they had already traveled in this landscape in some other life. English travelers, soon to follow to the French, echo their rhetoric: ". . . the general appearance of the country was the same as ever," wrote William Watkins in 1788, "but alas! how changed is Athens."[35] The fact that the present landscape is inhabited by people who do not, for the most part, resemble classical statues only reinforces the travellers' sense that Greece belongs, in some mythical sense, to them. Finding the present inhabitants un-

worthy gives classically educated foreigners the right to remove what is undervalued from Greek soil and take it to where it will be better appreciated.[36] It also gives them the right to intervene in the politics of Greece.

Byron's is the most celebrated of Romantic interventions. Furious at his countryman Lord Elgin for what he saw as the desecration of the Parthenon marbles, Byron became the model for a new style of foreign involvement in Greece: the desire to relive the classical as a modern heroic adventure. He may have been impatient with what he called "antiquarian twaddle," but he still saw his task as the restoration of a lost ancient glory and himself as both poet laureate of the Greek struggle for independence and a war hero. It is hard to overestimate the influence of Byron on European philhellenism. At least twelve editions of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* were published between 1812 and 1821, when the War of Independence officially began. It was as popular on the continent as in England and was translated into the major European languages. Byron's letters from Greece reveal him to be a shrewd and intelligent observer of the unheroic nature of the Greek struggle.[37] Nevertheless, on his final journey to Greece, he brought two helmets with him, modeled on those he had seen on ancient vases. In the last letters and journal entries from Greece, the contradictions of Byron's particular brand of romantic Hellenism and his English liberal humanitarianism become clear.

One hundred twenty years after his death, the contradictions of Byron's classical education and his observations of contemporary Greek reality were echoed by members of the British Special Operations Executive parachuted into central Greece to help organize resistance to the Axis forces occupying the country. Almost all were drawn from the upper-class establishment and had attended the same schools. A number were chosen because of a background in classical archaeology. They played a dubious, some would say irresponsible, role in the Greek resistance.[38] Of course, the issues that concerned them, including communism, were very different from those of Byron's day, but their memoirs and reports are filled with similar observations on the contrast between the classical Greece they had studied and idealized and the perceived insufficiencies of her present inhabitants. One member went so far as to call the Greeks "the hairy apes that infest this country."[39] Suspicious of the left-wing resistance leaders, the British officers made exceptions for an occasional representative who had "a thoroughly western mentality," was "sensible and more honest than most Greeks," or had "a sense of humor."[40] In other words, the more Greeks behaved like Europeans, the more they were to be trusted. In some ways, the comments of the aristocratic British liaison officers can be taken as a form of orientalism, but a very particular one. The

inhabitants of Greece are a disappointment because there is an expectation of something quite different. The classical education of the British gentleman was part of his patrimony; it had given him an expertise, an ability to judge Greece on his own terms. He felt he knew Greece in some sense better than the Greeks who lived there. The sense of déjà vu that we observed in the eighteenth-century travelers is combined, in the twentieth-century British officers, with a perfect self-confidence about their knowledge of what is good for the childish, hospitable, but unreliable Greeks.

Henry Miller waxes lyrical in his criticism of the attitude of the British toward the Greeks on the eve of the war:

> The English in Greece—a sorry lot, by the way—seem to have a poor opinion of the Greek character. . . . The Englishman in Greece is a farce and an eyesore: he isn't worth the dirt between a poor Greek's toes. . . . No wonder Durrell wanted to fight with the Greeks. Who wouldn't prefer to fight beside a Boubouline, for example, than with a gang of sickly, effeminate recruits from Oxford or Cambridge?[41]

For a moment, we imagine that he, as the earthy, virile American he portrays himself as, will relate to modern Greece differently, that he will come without the classical baggage that treats the contemporary inhabitants of Greece as interlopers in a sacred terrain. But listen to Miller as he turns from the ruins of a Bronze Age site in Crete to the neighboring village.

> The village of Hagia Triada, looked at from any point in time, stands out like a jewel of consistency, integrity, significance. When a miserable Greek village, such as the one I am speaking of, and the counterpart of which we have by the thousand in America, embellishes its meagre, stultified life by the adoption of telephone, radio, automobile, tractor, et cetera, the meaning of the word communal becomes so fantastically distorted that one begins to wonder what is meant by the phrase "human society." There is nothing human about these sporadic agglomerations of beings; they are beneath any known level of life that this globe has known. They are less in every way than the pygmies who are truly nomadic and who move in filthy freedom with delicious security (1941: 122-3).

Miller's classical moment here is Bronze Age rather than fifth-century, but it makes little difference. He, the Western educated foreigner, is able to *know* the ancient village in a way the locals do not. He reads in its rubble a "significance" and "integrity" lacking in the modern Greek village. Like the British, the French and the German travelers, archaeologists, looters of antiq-

uities, soldiers, and politicians who have intervened in modern Greek affairs, Miller writes with a surety that ancient Greece belongs to him.[42] The Greeks who inhabit the same geographical space are acceptable only if they display a reverence for the classical or in some way physically resemble what his imagination suggests is the classical type—a woman passing with a water jar on her head, or the poet Seferis, "who has caught this spirit of eternality which is everywhere in Greece and who has embedded it in his poems" (1941: 46).

The Hellenic Burden

> Contemporary Greece as a state and a country, as a political entity and a historical experience, remains the most spectacular and interesting construct of idealism.
>
> Vassilis Lambropoulos[43]

The consequences of the European idealization of antiquity were, as we have seen, usually a devaluation of modern Greeks. But Greeks were not slow to turn the reverence for their ancestors to advantage. The majority of the Greek inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire might have looked back with more pride to their Byzantine ancestors than their pagan ones but by the time the struggle for independence began, Greek leaders were appealing for European aid in a language they knew would carry weight. In 1821, the commander of the Spartan forces, Petros Mavromichailis, issued a manifesto to the peoples of Europe inviting them to assist the Greeks in their struggle for independence from the Turks. The tone of his statement suggests a sophisticated gift for blackmail:

> We earnestly invite the united aid of all civilized nations to promote the attainment of our holy and legitimate purpose, the recovery of our rights and the revival of our unhappy nation. With every right does Hellas, our mother, whence ye, also, O Nations, have become enlightened, anxiously request your friendly assistance with money, arms and counsel . . .[44]

In one stroke, Mavromichailis reminds his European audience that not only are Greeks the descendants of the classical Hellenes, but they deserve to be supported because Europe owes its civilization to them. The rhetoric was successful in drawing Europeans to the Greek side, but support was bought at a high price. From the imposition, by the European powers, of a German monarch, Otto of Bavaria, as first King of the Hellenes to Churchill's insistence on the restoration of a Greek king at the end of World War II, modern Greece

has been subject to a special kind of intervention in its internal affairs. Europeans have presumed to know what was good for Greece, and Greeks have learned to ask.

A more subtle price was paid, perhaps, by Greek artists and intellectuals, a burden of expectation that, like the politicians, they were not always averse to shouldering. Those who did what was expected of them, who stressed the continuity of modern Greece with ancient Greece, who fitted the concept Western Europe had of their classical heritage, were successful. Vassilis Lambropoulos, one of the first modern Greek critics to question the canon of modern Greek literature, describes well the pressure felt by modern Greek writers:

> This pressure to be true Hellenes was presented to the Greeks as their only way or chance to define an acceptable identity and justify their political claims. . . . Literature, in particular, had to be cultivated and promoted so that linguistic and intellectual continuity could eloquently be attested. . . . Thus, Greek writers started reading and writing in the glorious shadow of Homer, Aeschylus, Thucydides, and Plato. The unparalleled models were still there, but were their inheritors worthy of that treasure? (1988: 8)

The history of modern Greek literature as well as literary criticism revolves around the question of continuity. As soon as the new nation was formed, the search began for parallels between the existing forms of indigenous literature, most of it in the form of folk song lyrics, and the ancient world. At times the search for continuity took the form of reviving older forms of language or custom, at others, the purging of contemporary language or literary subjects. To the extent that writers fulfilled the criteria imposed first from without and increasingly from within to be representatives of a revived antiquity, they were successful. The two Nobel Prize winners, Seferis and Elytis, the two Lenin Prize winners, Varnalis and Ritsos, and Greece's best-known writer, Nikos Kazantzakis, have all, in some way, satisfied the desire of the international community to see a revived Greek spirit manifest itself in literature. Cavafy's rather unusual brand of diasporic neo-Hellenism has also contributed to his reputation.

For the last three decades, younger Greek writers and critics have begun revising and questioning the premises of modern Greek nationalism, of the discourses of Greek literary criticism, of the formation of Greece's canon of poetry and prose. Their task is made more difficult than in most countries where similar projects have become the norm because of the weight that ancient Greece still exerts. What they have revealed is not surprising: The

classifying process at work in modern Greece has been a consistent project of rewarding and enshrining those authors who seemed to represent the revived spirit of ancient Greece. Again, Henry Miller provides a perfect illustration of the attitude of the foreign reader/observer to the modern Greek writer. After visiting the ruins of Eleusis, Miller concludes:

> Actually Eleusis is still intact and it is we who are broken, dispersed, crumbling to dust. Eleusis lives, lives eternally in the midst of a dying world.
>
> The man who has caught this spirit of eternality which is everywhere in Greece and who has embedded it in his poems is George Seferiadis, whose pen name is Seferis. I know his work only from translation, but even if I had never read his poetry I would say this is the man who is destined to transmit the flame (1941: 46).

This is what modern Greeks are up against: the inviting burden of the neo-Hellenic. It is enough for Seferis to look and behave like Miller's fantasy of a revived classical Greek poet. He doesn't even have to write a poem to prove it! The temptation to shoulder the burden has proved irresistible; internationally and nationally the rewards have been considerable. At its best, the classical moment may have inspired Greeks to create some remarkable works of literature. At its worst, it has caused the devaluing of all those works that failed to conform to an imagined perception of antiquity. In its most banal form, it has caused Greeks to market miniature acropolises on ashtrays and object to another country taking a name they regard as part of their national patrimony.

Reverence for the classical moment still distorts the image that we have of Greece and that Greeks have of themselves. As I have suggested, it also distorts our view of ancient Greece and clouds our reading of its literature. Its singularity remains an institutionalized bulwark of our education and our thinking. Perhaps looking at the way such "classical moments" are constructed across cultures is one way of questioning not the achievements of the ancient Greeks, but the way we have received, distorted, and used their civilization for our own ends.

Notes

1. As Gregory Nagy (*Pindar's Homer: The Lyric Possession of an Epic Past*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1990), 61, points out, it is not only an ordering in the sense of separation but of judging as well. The *classici* were the authors of the first

class, equivalent to the *enkrithenentes*, a term used by the scholars associated with the Museum housing the library of Alexandria for those authors who had been recognized as having prevailed in the process of judging or *krisis*.

2. Pollitt, J. J., *Art and Experience in Classical Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).

3. Vernant, Jean-Pierre, *The Origins of Greek Thought* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), 48-9.

4. In his discussion of the evolution of Greek poetry, Nagy (1990: 52-81) extends A. M. Snodgrass's concept of Panhellenism (Snodgrass, Anthony M., *The Dark Age of Greece: An Archeological Survey of the Eleventh to the Eight Centuries,* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press,1971, 421, 435; and *An Archeology of Greece: The Present State and Future Scope of the Discipline,* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987, 160-5), using it as a hermeneutic model, one that he considers an evolutionary trend. To briefly summarize his discussion is to risk oversimplification of a complex and subtle argument. Nagy is principally concerned with the crystallization or fixation of poetic texts that have emerged from a fluid oral tradition. Here I quote a passage that may serve as representative of his approach: "By Panhellenic poetry, then, I mean those kinds of poetry and song that operated not simply on the basis of local traditions suited for local audiences. Rather, Panhellenic poetry would have been the product of an evolutionary synthesis of traditions that tend to be common to most locales and peculiar to none" (1990: 54).

5. Nagy argues that this process of crystallization of texts in a Panhellenic form and its corollary, the development of a faculty for criticizing textual variants, is not a factor of the poet's ability to write but of his social mobility (1990: 57).

6. The egalitarian nature of the "political society" of classical Athens was, of course, a myth. The citizens formed an elite body that not only excluded women, metics, slaves, and children, but was itself stratified in terms of class and status. However, some noncitizens seem to have attended dramatic performances, and the seating in theaters was egalitarian (Ober, Josiah, and Barry Strauss, "Drama, Political Rhetoric and the Discourse of Athenian Democracy." In *Nothing to Do with Dionysos?*, ed. J. Winkler and F. Zeitlin, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989) 235. See also Josiah Ober's excellent study, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens: Rhetoric, Ideology, and the Power of the People* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

7. Again, Nagy's extensive and illuminating discussion of *nomoi* and *harmonia* links the emergence of these concepts to an ongoing process of Panhellenization, in this case, of song (1990: 82-115).

8. Murphy, Peter, "Metropolitan Rhythms: A Preface to a Musical Philosophy for the New World." *Thesis Eleven*, 56 (forthcoming).

9. *Republic* 387-402a.

10. See Rouzer, Paul, "The Classical Moment: China" (chapter 4 of this book).

11. Michalowski, Piotr. Paper presented at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, March 1996.

12. See *Republic* 423d-425a, 397-401, 404d-e, *Laws*, 700a-701b, 812b-c. See also McCann (chapter 6 of this book).

13. See 1981: 3. See also Ober and Strauss (1989: 238).

14. duBois, Page, *Torture and Truth* (London: Routledge, 1991), 48.

15. duBois (1991: 49).

16. duBois (1991: 248). See also Vernant (1981: 3): "The tragic writers' use of a technical legal vocabulary underlines the affinities between the most favored tragic themes and certain cases which fell within the competence of the courts. . . . The tragic poets make use of this legal vocabulary, deliberately exploiting its ambiguities, its fluctuations and its incompleteness."

17. **duBois (1991: 49).**

18. Froma Zeitlin ("Playing the Other: Theater, Theatricality and the Feminine," *Representations*, 11, 1985) 63-94 argues that the female element is what drives Greek tragedy and puts the male citizen's self in question. This split between the position of women in society and in the texts of tragedies indicates that Athenian drama is traumatized.

19. I have argued elsewhere (Holst-Warhaft, Gail, *Dangerous Voices: Women's Laments and Greek Literature*, London: Routledge, 1992) that following Solon's legislation restricting womens' behavior at funerals, particularly the singing of laments, tragedy became a vehicle for staging and commenting on the dangers of women's "excessive" displays of grief.

20. In book 10 (605-607) of the *Republic*, Plato suggests there is a history of antipathy between poetry and philosophy and supports his argument with quotations, but the sources remain unknown.

21. Translation from Silk, Michael, and J. P. Stern, *Nietzsche on Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 4.

22. Stoneman, Richard, *Land of Lost Gods: The Search for Classical Greece* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987: 6) cites as evidence for the trade the discovery of a ship in the Piraeus harbor in 1959. Another ship found off Cerigotto in 1900 contained cargo of the Augustan period.

23. Stoneman (1987: 9).

24. Stoneman (1987: 18).

25. Campbell, John, and Philip Sherrard, *Modern Greece* (New York: Praeger, 1968), 21.

26. Campbell and Sherrard (1968: 21).

27. Quoted in translation in Campbell and Sherrard (1968: 23).

28. As Stanford, W. B. (*The Ulysses Theme*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1968) 125-45, demonstrates, Odysseus exemplifies the characteristics the Romans disliked in the Greeks: wiliness, cleverness, opportunism. Juvenal (*Satires* 3. 60ff) called the Greeks "a nation of playboys." It is a characterization that some Western-educated modern Greeks would reflect onto themselves. In his *Ταξιδεύοντας: Ιταλία, Αίγυπτος, Σίνα, Ιερουσαλήμ, Κύπρος, Ο Μοριάς* (Athens: Eleni Kazantzakis, 1965) 326, Nikos Kazantzakis describes the typical modern Greek as "clever and shallow, with no metaphysical anxieties."

29. Campbell and Sherrard (1968: 39).

30. As Stathis Gourgouris (*Dream Nation: Enlightenment, Colonization and the Institution of Modern Greece*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996) 133 notes, "What does emerge as the core of *Altertumswissenschaft* in Germany is precisely the Humboldtian thesis that the ancient Greeks are the transcendental cultural body that can be reinscribed into German modernity and thus used to dissolve its social and political fragmentation."

31. Winckelmann, Johann Joachim, *The History of Ancient Art,* trans. H. Lodge (Boston: James Osgood, 1878).

32. Voltaire was typical in his attitude. A classical education was a sine qua non for the cultivated French of the eighteenth century, but this did not confer a particular status on the Greeks of later generations. In fact, Voltaire saw the Byzantine theocratic state as being responsible for the decline of Greek civilization. Olga Augustinos, *French Odysseys: Greece in French Literature from the Renaissance to the Romantic Era*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1994) 12-48, provides a succinct summary of the attitude of French Enlightenment thinkers toward Greece.

33. Quoted in Augustinos (1994: 142).

34. Guys, Pierre Augustin, *Voyage Littéraire de la Grèce, ou Lettres sûr les Grecs Anciens et Modernes, Avec une Parallèle de leur Moeurs* (Paris: Chez la Veuve Duchesne, 1781).

35. Watkins, William, *Travels though Switzerland, Italy, Sicilly, the Greek islands, to Constantinople, through Part of Greece, Ragusa, and the Dalmation Isles. In a Series of Letters to Pennoyre Watkins, M.A., in the Years 1787, 1788 and 1789* (London, 1773), ii, 172. For other such accounts, see also Constantine David. *Early Greek Travellers and the Hellenic Ideal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

36. As Captain Verninac Saint Maur, commander of the expedition to bring the Egyptian obelisk to the Place de la Concorde, said, "Antiquity is a garden that belongs by natural right to those to cultivate its fruits." Quoted in Stoneman (1987: 165).

37. "Whoever goes into Greece at present should do it as Mrs Fry went into Newgate—not in the expectation of meeting with any existing probity but in the hope that time and better treatment will reclaim the present burglarious and larcenous tendencies which have followed this general gaol delivery." So Byron wrote in his journal at Cephalonia on September 8, 1823. *Selected Prose*, Peter Gunn, ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), 512.

38. For a fairly positive account of the role of the British Liaison officers in wartime Greec, see Clogg, Richard, "The Special Operations Executive in Greece," in J. Iatrides, ed., *Greece in the 1940's*, (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1981), 102-18. For a more damning account, see Smith, Ole, "The Memoirs and Reports of the British Liaison Officers in Greece," *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora*, vol. xi/3, (New York: Pella, 1984), 9-34.

39. Quoted in Clogg (1981: 108).

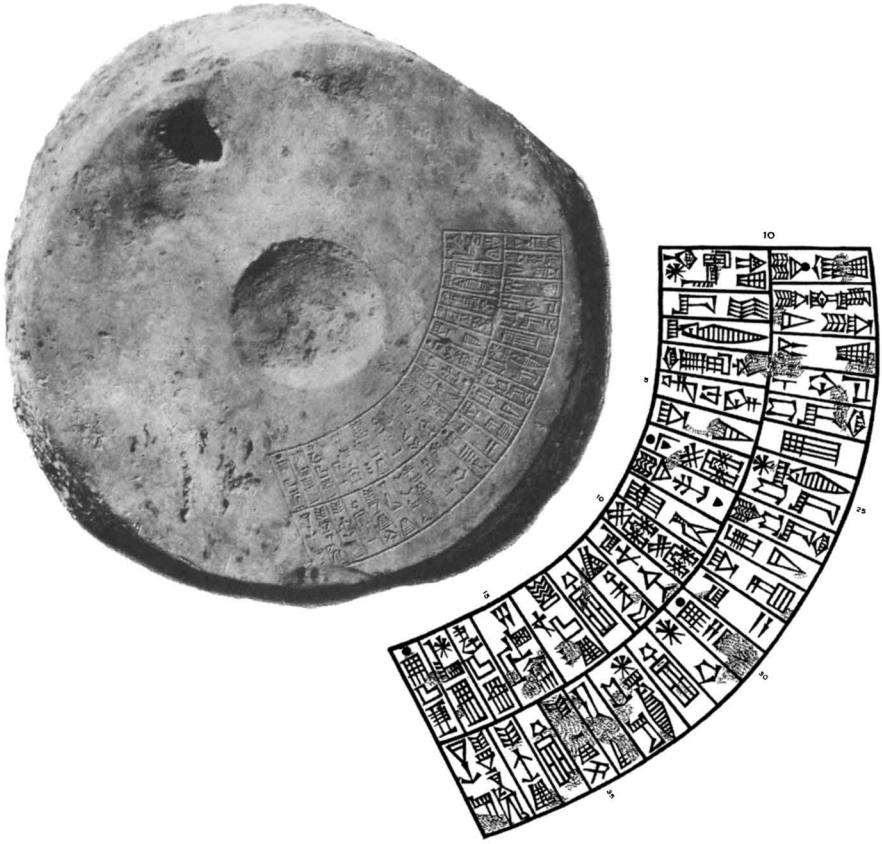
40. Woodhouse, Christopher M., E. C. W. Myers and N. Hammond, quoted in Smith (1984), 26.

41. Miller, Henry, *The Colossus of Maroussi* (New York: New Directions, 1941) 36-7.

42. For a detailed analysis of the effect of viewing classical sites on European and modern Greek writers see Artemis Leontis's *Topographies of Hellenism: Mapping the Homeland* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

43. Lambropoulos, Vassilis, *Literature as a National Institution: Studies in the Politics of Modern Greek Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

44. St. Clair, William, *That Greece Might Still Be Free: The Philhellenists in the War of Independence* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 13.



Stone door socket with an inscription of Naram-Sin from the temple of Shar-Maradda (Yale Babylonian Collection)

CHAPTER TWO

"They Requested Him as God of Their City": *A Classical Moment in the Mesopotamian Experience*

William W. Hallo

The "classical moment" is an inherent paradox. Classics are high points of creative endeavor and therefore belong to the realm of the arts, including literature. Moments occur in time and thus are at home in history. Most specialists in literature addressing this topic would see their assignment as primarily finding a component in the literature of their culture that may be defined as classical, whether or not it correlates with a moment in its general history.

In my work, I have always been equally concerned with literature and history. To be more precise, I have concentrated on those aspects of literature, and of literary history, that bear directly on the reconstruction of history, and in that reconstruction I have deliberately made use of literary sources. That puts me at odds with some of the leading historians of Near Eastern antiquity. But it gives me a certain advantage in dealing with the paradox posed by the question of classical moments, for it entitles me to look for a moment that is classical from the point of view of both literature and history.

Let me address two general questions relevant to our theme before applying the questions—and the theme—to a specific candidate in the Mesopotamian experience. The first question is one of methodology. Specifically, what role is played by literary texts and the literary tradition generally in the reconstruction of ancient history? The maximalist position gives them full credence, barring nonliterary evidence to the contrary. The minimalist position feels free to utilize them only when they are positively confirmed by nonliterary evidence. (In biblical studies, I am inclined to identify an extreme variant of the latter view and call it the microminimalist position: Here, where the biblical evidence is by nature literary, the only nonliterary evidence considered worthy of validating a biblical assertion is inevitably extra-biblical evidence.)

Given the fact that I have been credited or blamed for introducing the above terminology into the discussion, you will not be surprised that I like to

place myself in the golden mean between the two extremes. As indicated, I have always stressed literature and history equally in my work, focusing on literary texts with historical implications, and reconstructing history with the help of the literary texts. In my surveys of ancient Near Eastern and biblical history, I have enunciated the principle that the ancient literary sources (or canons, as I prefer to call them) are to be taken seriously but not uncritically. At the same time, I like to remember that contemporary monuments have their own biases, while archives are woefully "laconic" even if and when they are objective.[1]

Thus I have no problem invoking the literary evidence, or even privileging it, in order to attempt to define and identify a "classical moment." But that attempt, involving as it does the entire ancient Near East, raises a second question: By what right do I presume to survey so vast a terrain in time and space? Here I can appeal to a concept of my own that I have long employed or at least played with.

In *The Ancient Near East: A History,* which appeared first in 1971 and in a second edition in 1997, and in other surveys published in the interim, I have tried to recognize a certain "common rhythm" that characterized the outline history of all the major portions of the Near Eastern *oikoumene* (and the Aegean world). I have suggested that we can identify certain "troughs and crests" that the principal geographical subdivisions of this *oikoumene* experienced—either in tandem with each other or in inverse proportion to each other.[2]

So, for example, Mesopotamia moved in tandem with Egypt in respect to the beginning of Bronze Age civilization in both places at the end of the fourth millennium B.C., or the rise of both areas to particular prominence in the Middle Bronze period, especially during the Old Babylonian phase of Mesopotamia and the Middle Kingdom of Egypt. The end of those periods saw the parallel fall of Babylon and Memphis. Or again, the transition from Bronze Age to Iron Age in the twelfth century provides an illustration of this congruity.[3]

On the other hand, the history of Syria-Palestine tended to move in inverse proportion to trends in the great river valleys. Ebla flourished before Sargon and Naram-Sin destroyed it; Mari fell to Hammurapi; and Ugarit and Emar enjoyed their respective floruits when the great empires were wrestling with the upheavals of the end of the Bronze Age. In the history of Israel, the highlights of Solomon's reign and that of Jeroboam II were similarly periods of weakness in Egypt and Mesopotamia.[4]

In this scheme of matters, a prominent role is played by so-called intermediate periods. This concept, initially at home in Egyptian historiography,[5] has been gingerly advanced also for Mesopotamia. There Edzard's First

Intermediate Period is approximately the interval between Gilgamesh and Sargon, which he equates with the entire Early Dynastic period (in my scheme it is more precisely Early Dynastic IIb-III) and assesses at 500 years (actually more like 300, that is, circa 2600-2300 B.C. by the "middle chronology"); Egypt's First Intermediate Period is generally dated to approximately 2160-2040 B.C. Edzard's Second Intermediate Period is the equivalent of the Early Old Babylonian period, or approximately 2000-1800 B.C. (2000-1750 B.C. by his count); Egypt's Second Intermediate Period dates approximately from 1800 or 1750 to 1550 B.C.[6] My Third Intermediate Period equals Brinkman's post-Kassite period (1158-722 B.C.) and resembles Adams's "Middle Babylonian" period (1150-626 B.C.); it is comparable to Egypt's Third Intermediate period which Kitchen dates from 1100-650 B.C.[7] Thus we have a poor match between Egypt and Mesopotamia for the first two, but an excellent one for the third.

This concept of intermediate periods refers to periods of decentralization and breakdown of central authority (imperial or other), and implies that such periods were aberrations, that the norm was one of centralization and stability. That position is hard to sustain in some cases. As I already put it in my review of Edzard in 1959, "The periods of political unity which enclose Edzard's two 'Intermediate periods' are either too hypothetical (Uruk I and Kish I), too interrupted by disunity (Agade-Ur III), or too short (Hammurabi 30-Samsu-iluna 9) to qualify as norms of Babylonian political achievement, even if it can be shown . . . that the Babylonians themselves regarded them as such."[8] Similarly, Brinkman speaks of "unity over several centuries" as "the exception [that] it had been with the earlier ephemeral empires which had quickly fragmented once their strength was spent." Only "with the extension of Kassite rule to the south [was] lower Mesopotamia unified."[9]

But even if the period of Babylonian unity is extended to include the end of the Amorite (Hammurapi) dynasty and all of the Kassite dynasty (c. 1760-1160 B.C.), as implied by the concept of a Third Intermediate Period, it is barely longer than that period. The reunification that followed under Assyrians and Chaldaeans (722-535 B.C.) is certainly shorter. Similarly, the Third Intermediate Period in Egypt is longer than the periods of centralization between which it is presumably intermediate.

Of late, Mesopotamia has become a source of type cases for the "collapse of empires" syndrome popularized by Paul Kennedy for more recent periods of history. Thus Norman Yoffee has used "the decline and rise of Mesopotamian civilization: an ethnoarchaeological perspective" to illustrate "the collapse of ancient states and civilizations." Harvey Weiss speaks of

"the genesis and collapse of the Akkadian empire" as "the accidental refraction of historical law."[10]

In point of fact, centrifugal tendencies are dominant everywhere in the ancient Near East: as "petty-statism" in Mesopotamia, in the repeated rise of the nomarchs or rulers of provinces (nomes) in Egypt, and in the persistence of the theocratic ideal as well as the reality of the divided monarchy in Israel.

But it was particularly in Mesopotamia that intermediate periods and intervals of petty-statism were in a sense the norm by their sheer length, whereas periods of maximum concentration of imperial power sandwiched between the intermediate periods were relatively short-lived by comparison. They impressed themselves on later memory, and hence on our own reconstructions of ancient Near Eastern history, precisely because of their conspicuous, exceptional character.

The result is a major split between the ideal and the reality. There is an ideal of Mesopotamian unity that is expressed in a variety of ways, at least during the "classical period": by the Sumerian King List and its theme of a continuous hegemony by a succession of dynasties; by the claim on certain royal names, titles, and epithets in diverse dynasties; by the "Sumerian amphictyony" and its shared upkeep of the national religious center; by the high priestess of the moon-god Nanna at Ur and her appointment from the ranks of the leading dynasty at any given time; by the common historical tradition expressed in the characteristic mode of liver omens; by the worship of deceased royalty even of dynasties other than one's own; and by the creation of royal hymns in honor of whatever dynasty controlled the religious capital and its priestly poets.[11]

The realization of the ideal of Mesopotamian unity is typically associated with outstanding monarchs, and it is in *their* reigns that we must presumably hope to meet our notions of a classical moment. These monarchs captured the imagination of their contemporaries and of the later historical tradition within Mesopotamia itself, and have survived into the modern consciousness thanks either to their mention (or the mention of their later namesakes) in biblical or classical literature, or to their rediscovery by two centuries of Assyriology and Near Eastern archaeology. I have already mentioned two of them, Gilgamesh of Uruk and Sargon of Akkad, and to these names others could easily be added, such as Hammurapi of Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar (I and II) of Isin and Babylon respectively, or Sargon (I and II) and Tiglath-pileser (I and III) of Assyria. But I will leave all these aside in favor of my own preferred candidate, Naram-Sin of Akkad.

The "classical period" of Mesopotamian history has been equated with

the Old Babylonian period and its immediate aftermath (c. 2000-1500 B.C.),[12] but I prefer to equate it with the half millennium from the accession of Naram-Sin to the death of Hammurapi (c. 2250-1750 B.C.).[13] The classical *phase* of the Sargonic dynasty (Naram-Sin and his son Shar-kali-sharri) occupies most of the first of these five centuries. Dominique Charpin calls this phase "la période 'sargonique classique,'" and I have described it as the "high Sargonic period." Others dissent slightly: Zhi considers the reign of Shar-kali-sharri to be already late Sargonic; Wilcke holds to a reign of 56 years for Sargon and only 37 for Naram-Sin, based on a total of 181 years for the whole Sargonic dynasty in the new Isin exemplar of the Sumerian King List.[14]

Within this classical phase, the classical *moment* may be said to be that when Naram-Sin allowed himself to be deified or, in the words of the newly found Bassetki inscription, when "they [the citizens of his city] requested him[15] as god of their city."[16] The inscription captures the very moment of a revolution in politico-religious ideology, and in the very language of the royal chancery that presided over the innovation. If correctly interpreted, it provides an inside view, so to speak, of Naram-Sin's transformation of the Mesopotamian landscape, a transformation that had previously only been inferred on the basis of his many innovations in the royal titulary. He became "king of the four quarters" early in his reign, added the "divine determinative" and divine title later in his reign (and was followed in this respect by his son Shar-kali-sharri in the early part of *his* reign), and finally adopted the title of "strong one" (in effect, "the great") toward the end of his reign. The sources of some or all of these new titles may well have lain outside of Mesopotamia—Ebla, Egypt, and Elam respectively have been suggested—but between them they represent a revolution in Mesopotamian ideology.[17]

The implications of deification were particularly profound and far-reaching. They led to a reaction by the priesthood that included a change in temple architecture and the emergence of the anthropomorphic and more particularly the basilomorphic representation of the deity in statuary and glyptic. The divine statue in turn now became the focus of the sacrificial cult, the centerpiece for the "journeys of the gods," and the addressee for petitions.[18]

Naram-Sin, however, matched his ideological innovations with administrative reforms, regularizing the system of year names, and effecting the growth and spread of archives, for example, to Adab, Nippur, Susa, Gasur, and the Diyala Valley. He carried on vigorous foreign relations as revealed in the first place by contemporary evidence in the form of inscriptions and monuments from as far away as Diyar Bakr, Kara Dag (Lullubi), and Brak (Nawar?); of date formulas mentioning such distant targets as Simurrum, Magan,

Mardaman, Arman, and Ebla; and of a treaty with Elam, if correctly dated to his time.[19] But we may also give due credence to later (Old Babylonian) copies of lost original monuments mentioning additional campaigns in faraway Subartu, Talhat, the Amanus, Lebanon and Taurus Mountains, and Ullisu on the Mediterranean coast.[20]

In art, the Sargonic period was outstanding in its cylinder seals, with the vast majority of datable examples belonging to its classical phase as defined above.[21] The statuary was less abundant but equally radical in its break with the past as illustrated, again, by the Naram-Sin inscription from Bassetki in northern Iraq found on an amazing copper figure of what may be a nude warrior; it makes it likely that the remarkable bronze head of a king from Nineveh, in the past frequently attributed to Sargon, should rather be regarded as picturing his grandson Naram-Sin.[22] The latter's steles and rock reliefs in the Zagros foothills are also justly famous as illustrations of the heights scaled by the royal artists.

In linguistic terms, Akkadian came into its own for monumental inscriptions and archival documents. Little or no Akkadian literature is preserved from the entire Sargonic period other than a few incantations and a love charm, and even the fragment of the revolt of Lugal-anne against Naram-Sin may be a student copy of a royal inscription.[23] But later Akkadian literary traditions fastened by preference on (Sargon and) Naram-Sin. And they at first tended to reflect a favorable judgement, notably in Old Babylonian copies of his royal inscriptions, in the Old Babylonian version of the Cutha legend where he is ultimately delivered, in the tale of the general insurrection that he eventually overcame, and in the fragmentary tale of a success against the city of Apishal.[24] An unfavorable judgment evolved only in much later versions of some of these traditions—notably the Cutha legend—and in the so-called Weidner Chronicle, now revealed by the new duplicate from Sippar as a fictitious letter to a king of Babylon from a king of Isin; but here Naram-Sin is only one of many rulers condemned for neglecting the cult of Marduk.[25]

Where Naram-Sin received consistently "bad press," beginning already in Old Babylonian times, was in the Sumerian composition variously known by the modern designations of "The Curse of Agade" or "The Ekur Avenged." Here he figures as the very paradigm of an *Unheilskönig,* the hapless royal target of divine anger and punishment as carried out by human enemies. But the very fact of his paradigmatic role shows that we are not dealing with historical fact here but rather with a process of telescoping in which all the misfortunes eventually known to have befallen a dynasty are associated with its last major figure, just as all its triumphs are attributed to its first major figure.[26]

The true measure of the Akkadian dynasty in Sumerian literature must be sought elsewhere, specifically in the oeuvre of Enheduanna, daughter of Sargon and thus aunt of Naram-Sin. This princess functioned as high priestess of the moon-god at Ur; indeed she was the first of a long line of princesses appointed to this post by their royal fathers as a sign of the fathers' hegemony in all of Sumer and Akkad. She is known by the poems attributed to her, by her portrait and inscription on an alabaster disk from Ur, and by the seals inscribed to her by her retainers. Her poetry is an early high point of Sumerian literary style; presumably her father married a Sumerian priestess and Sumerian was literally her mother('s) tongue. It was used in the service of a series of poetic renditions of her dynasty's triumphs ascribed to the goddess Inanna and of the dynasty's general solicitude for all the cults, both those of the conquerors (Akkad) and those of the conquered (Sumer).

The next known occupant of the office was a daughter of Naram-Sin, Enmenanna. Her designation was memorialized in a date formula of her father, and she left two inscriptions of her own, as well as three dedicated to her by her retainers.[27] Where Naram-Sin occurs in these inscriptions, he is already deified, and it may be argued that her appointment followed his apotheosis. By the same token, Enheduanna could have continued to serve at least until that time. The office was known throughout the half millennium of the "classical period" to have been held for lengthy periods of time, regardless of changes of ruler and even of dynasty, so there is no a priori reason to doubt that she served into the reign of Naram-Sin.[28]

As to when Enheduanna composed her poems there is less certainty. But for purposes of present argument it may be noted here that all of Sumerian literature went through three discrete stages that can be identified as creation, adaptation, and canonization.[29] In the case of Enheduanna, it is known that at least one of her compositions is represented by a (single) exemplar of neo-Sumerian date (twenty-first century),[30] and it is not hard to suppose that her entire oeuvre was already being adapted, that is, put into writing, at that time, and thus very possibly had been created, that is, put into oral form, already in the preceding Sargonic period.

If it was, in fact, in Naram-Sin's reign that this occurred, it could be argued that it represented yet another response to his apotheosis. Just as the change in temple orientation and in the representation of the divine statue served to balance the new status of the king from the point of view of the priesthood, so too did Enheduanna's poetry and its preservation, presumably under the auspices of the scribal schools attached to the great temples of Nippur and elsewhere. Certain it is that she went out of her way to attribute the military triumphs of her dynasty to divine and not royal agency, and that she

pictured the royal role in domestic affairs as primarily a matter of serving the cults of the land.

What is most remarkable, however, is that this first of all nonanonymous authors in the world history of literature was a woman. Nor is she the last of the princess-poetesses of the Sumerian tradition. Rather, she set a pattern for later generations throughout what was defined above as the classical period of Mesopotamian civilization, not only for her priestly office, but for her poetic efforts.[31]

In conclusion, Naram-Sin was a great consolidator of his grandfather's imperial designs, but also a great innovator in his own right in such areas as ideology, administration, and foreign policy. His figure dominated the imagination of later ages. Like Sargon, he was worshiped; his statue received offerings as far away as Mari in Old Babylonian times and as long after his death as neo-Babylonian times in Sippar.[32] His name was resumed by kings of Eshnunna and Assur at the end of the "classical period." He became the stuff of legend, and possibly even passed into the Bible where the Nimrod of the Table of Nations (Genesis 10) who ruled Akkad and was the first "strong man" of history has more claim to be considered a throwback to Naram-Sin than to Tukulti-Ninurta I or anyone else.[33]

But Enheduanna was no less an innovator in the sphere of religion and literature than Naram-Sin in that of state policy. As priestess of the moon-god at Ur, her example inspired the very last king of an independent Mesopotamian polity to revive the post for his own daughter.[34] As creator of the first body of nonanonymous literature, she had imitators not only among the women but also the men of subsequent millennia as long as cuneiform was used as a vehicle of literary creativity.[35]

Thus the deification of Naram-Sin can be seen as a crucial moment in its impact both on subsequent history and, through the work of Enheduanna, on subsequent literature in Mesopotamia. Between them, these two larger-than-life members of the great Sargonic dynasty allow us to pinpoint a—perhaps the—classical moment in the Mesopotamian experience, and possibly the first that can be identified anywhere in human experience.

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Notes

1. All the above is argued and documented in detail in Hallo 1998.

2. Hallo and Simpson 1971, 1997; Hallo 1971b, 1980a:13, 1984, 1988, 1991:104f., 1996: 271-273.

3. On the last, see Ward and Joukowsky 1992, esp. Hallo 1992.

4. On Syria, see especially Chavalas and Hayes 1992; on Solomon and the "United Monarchy," see, e.g., Ishida 1982; on Jeroboam, II see, e.g., Cogan and Tadmor 1988: 160-164. For the debate on the historicity of the United Monarchy, see briefly Shea 1997.

5. Cf. especially Bell 1971.

6. Edzard 1957.

7. Hallo 1979: 109f.; Brinkman 1968; Adams 1965: 55-7; Kitchen 1972.

8. Hallo 1959: 235; repeated Hallo 1963: 112.

9. Brinkman 1974: 397.

10. Kennedy 1987; Yoffee 1979; Yoffee and Cowgill 1988; Weiss and Courty 1993.

11. Hallo 1963.

12. Foster 1993: 61-4.

13. Hallo 1993a: 49f.

14. Charpin 1987: 94; Hallo 1980: 191, 1981: 255, 1993: 19, n. 26; Zhi 1989: 4; Wilcke 1987: 91, 93.

15. Or even "demanded him" (*itaršunis-ma*) if we may so translate *erēšu* with Beckman 1996. Farber 1983: "wünschte(n) (die Bürger) . . . ihn sich."

16. Frayne 1993: 113f.; Jacobsen 1978-79: 12, n. 45. Differently Hirsch 1983-84: 61: "weil er . . . seine Stadt . . . von den Göttern als *ihre* Stadt, als (ihr) Akkade erbeten hatte."

17. Hallo 1957: 49-76, 1980.

18. Hallo 1993: 17-22.

19. But see Wilcke 1987: 108-11.

20. For all the preceding see Hallo and Simpson 1971: 61-3, 1997: 58-62; Frayne 1993: 84-7.

21. Boehmer 1965. For a particularly interesting example see Gibson and McMahon 1995: 13-5 with the comments of Hallo 1993a.

22. On both monuments, see Al-Fouadi 1976. Frayne 1993: 113f. considers the former a *lahmu,* i.e., a nude (and hairy) figure, for which see Wiggerman 1981-82, 1992: 186 *et passim.*

23. Foster 1993: 49-57; 1993a: 178.

24. For all these and other compositions, see now Westenholz 1997; previously Foster 1993: 106-12.

25. Al-Rawi 1990.

26. Hallo and Simpson 1971: 63, 149; 1997: 62, 147.

27. Frayne 1993: 87, 145f., 175-7.

28. Hallo and van Dijk 1968: 2, but I erred there in claiming inscriptional evidence; cf. rather Hallo 1971: 714; Westenholz 1989.

29. Hallo 1975.

30. Sjöberg 1969: 6 and pls. xxxviif.

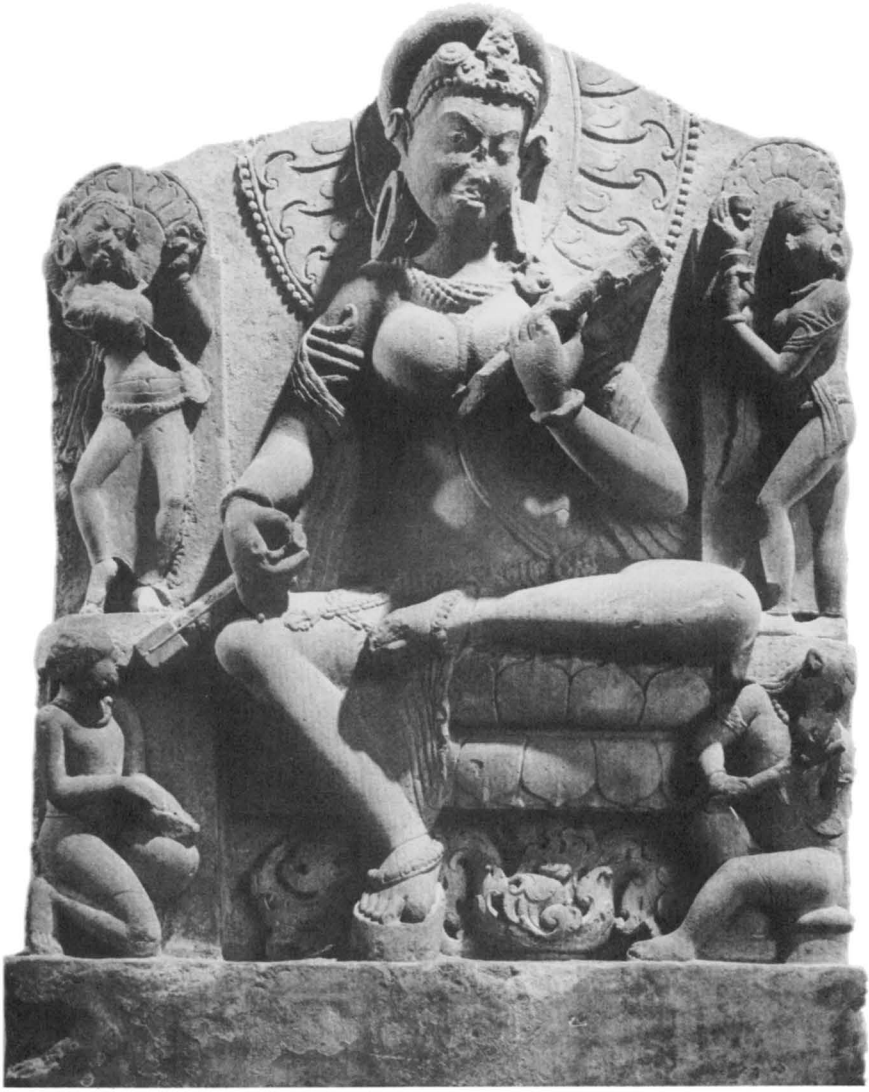
31. Hallo 1996: 157f., 171f., 182f., 262-9.

32. Hallo 1993: 22.

33. Hallo 1971a.

34. Beaulieu 1989: 71, 127-131 *et passim.*

35. On authorship in cuneiform literature generally, see Hallo 1993: 144-8; on women as authors, see Hallo 1993: 262-70.



Sandstone sculpture from the Gupta period depicting the goddess Sarásvatī (Uttar Pradesh, sixth century).

CHAPTER THREE

The Classical Moment in India:

The Grammar of Discrimination in Kālidāsa

Stephanie W. Jamison

The notion of the classical moment is both a problematic and a stimulating one. In the current scholarly climate even the qualified certainty that the definite article "the" seems to imply is suspect, and using the word "classical" without a knowing irony is almost an act of courage—summoning as it does the serene condescension of past scholarly generations, who confidently judged the value of their objects of study without the relativistic anxiety we now must all display. Even "moment" privileges a particular time and place at the expense of others. Though contributors to this volume were invited to examine the "negotiations" of power, gender, and the like that entered into the construction of the classical moment, the underlying assumption seemed still to be that such a moment existed—and that we have the power to define it. This exercise proved to be a bracing task: operating with part of what seems an old-fashioned paradigm, but reexamining its foundations with some of the tools of a new one.

Defining the notion poses particular problems for India. What does "the classical moment" mean in a culture where the most dreaded question Indologists hear from naive and well-intentioned students is the quite reasonable "What is the date of the text?" What does it mean when the second most dreaded question is "Do we know anything about the author?" In a field in which a reasonably secure and pinpointed date is often a four- or five-hundred year span, what counts as a moment? In a field in which our knowledge of an author (if we have a name at all) and his milieu is often entirely constructed from internal evidence in the text—that is, it is entirely circular—how can we attempt to construct causal relations between sociocultural circumstances and classical literature?

One could probably argue that there are a number of classical moments in the history of India, and I will do something of that later. But, despite that and also despite the difficulties I have just brought up, there is probably a pretty good agreement, both within and outside the culture, on what consti-

tutes "*the* classical moment" in ancient India and indeed on what author best embodies this moment. The moment is the so-called Golden Age of the early Gupta Empire (fourth to fifth century A.D.[1]), and the author is Kālidāsa, lyric poet and playwright, who put an indelible stamp on both of these genres and seems to have flourished in the fifth century.[2] That at least seems to be the current consensus about his dates, though as often in Indian literature the consensus sometimes seems to reflect more an exhausted desire not to have to discuss the subject anymore than an abundance of convincing evidence.

From now on I will operate with these as classical moment and representative classical author and will examine the style and contents of the literature of this period for the traits and attitudes that seem to define the "classical." I will now ask my last and most important semirhetorical question: What does a classical moment mean in a culture when the classical language has been dead for approximately a thousand years? As many have argued, for a range of cultures, extreme dissociation of the literary language from the prevailing vernacular was characteristic of classical moments. What had seemed to me the most peculiar and nontransferrable fact about "classical India" in fact turned out to be widely shared.

I will argue that much of what is characteristic of classical Sanskrit literature (and the culture we see reflected in the literature) is a product of the simple linguistic facts. Let me begin by setting them forth. The earliest Sanskrit we have is that of the Vedas, perhaps dating back to 1500 B.C. and showing variation and change for approximately one thousand years. The usages of the late Vedic period were exhaustively codified by the great linguist Pāṇini about 500 B.C., in what is without doubt one of the most extraordinary texts in the history of civilization, and thereafter Sanskrit, especially literary Sanskrit, did not significantly deviate from the canons established in Pāṇini's grammar. In other words, the language died—at least by the definition of a dead language as one that no longer changes. Though scholars quibble over the term "dead" for this language, particularly because the great mass of literature composed in Sanskrit lay far in the future, the fact remains that Pāṇini's originally descriptive grammar became a prescriptive one and that Sanskrit was no longer anyone's first language (and may not have been at the time of Pāṇini either).

The role of first language, mother tongue, was assumed by a number of dialects or languages known collectively as Middle Indic, and Sanskrit was relegated to the position of learned language, lingua franca among the educated and the powerful. In fact, it did not even fill that role in the centuries between Pāṇini and the turn of the millennium, during the dominance and spread of Buddhism and Jainism, whose preferred linguistic vehicles were Middle Indic. Our first Indic inscriptions are in Middle Indic—those of

Aśoka in the third century B.C.—and we only get Sanskrit inscriptions beginning about 150 A.D. In other words, Sanskrit fell into partial desuetude for a long period and was gradually and quite consciously *revived* as a carrier of culture, and what are considered the greatest works of Sanskrit literature (of the second half of the first millennium A.D.) were composed by nonnative speakers of the language.

This curious fact, in my opinion, has a number of consequences for the classical age, not merely in attitudes toward language, but in the very organization of experience in literature. In what follows I will identify what seem to me some of the salient features of classical Sanskrit literature, of Kālidāsa in particular, and suggest the way in which the history of the Sanskrit language is relevant to them. Many of the effects fall into the two categories of *polarization* and *isolation,* but I will begin with one that does not.

One of the crucial aspects of Sanskrit belles lettres of the classical age is the existence of an enormous and constantly growing body of explicit poetic theory, known as Alaṃkāraśāstra (the doctrine of poetic ornaments). Though we have no poetic treatises extant from exactly the time of Kālidāsa (except probably a treatise on drama, the Nāṭyaśāstra), it is fairly clear that the theory, in some form, existed and was followed by that poet, who seems a masterful manipulator of highly rule-governed forms rather than an exuberant innovator. The existence of a guiding, prescriptive theory is one of the major differences between classical Sanskrit poetry and that of the previous great era of "artful" poetry in Sanskrit, that of the earliest poems, the Rig Veda (RV). As the French Sanskritist Louis Renou pointed out, almost all the techniques of the classical art poetry known as *kāvya* have their counterparts in the Rig Veda.[3] It is also fairly clear that the Rig Vedic poets had canons of poetic practice and experience, which were passed down by the practitioners themselves. What they most likely did not have was a self-conscious, detachable "theory" propounded apart from the making of poetry. But the poets of the classical age, in order even to learn the language in which to compose, had to master such a theory: the (by now) prescriptive grammar of Pāṇini and his many commentators. The language of their art was not acquired naturally and unconsciously, but was the subject of hard study—the intricate rules and subrules to be memorized, rather than effortlessly internalized as the rules of a first language are. If the making of language itself was a self-conscious and learned affair, the making of poetry could hardly be less so, and a prescriptive poetic theory arose on the model of prescriptive grammar.

Let us now turn to the notion of polarization in language and how it is reflected in classical works. Since Sanskrit is the first language of no one, there is no continuum between everyday/colloquial/dialectal/lower-class speech and the high speech of high art. There are only sharp dichotomies and stark

choices. The Sanskrit of classical literature is not an enhanced variant of normal speech, but a distinct language. This is quite strikingly reflected in the linguistic behavior in drama: high-born men[4] speak Sanskrit, women (including queens) and low-born men speak varieties of Prākrit (Middle Indic), and everyone understands everyone else. This, of course, does not directly reflect linguistic reality—the Prākrits of the classical dramas are as stylized as the Sanskrit and at that period probably even less easily understood—but it does suggest the polarizing nature of linguistic behavior in this era.

When one compares classical Sanskrit literature with its antecedents, particularly the great epics, the Mahābhārata (MBh) and the Rāmāyaṇa (R),[5] one is in fact struck by how many other cultural continua have become polarized. It may be too much to suggest that the language situation provided the model and the impetus for this polarization, but one can at least notice the analogous features.

One of the most obvious of these polarizations is that of gender. The Sanskrit epics, particularly the Mahābhārata, are full of strong, spunky female characters. Though the MBh is the story of a disastrous war, and so also of male warriors, it is full of memorable females, often taking charge of men who have more brawn than brains. This epic even includes a certain number of "gender-bending" stories in the modern mode: sex changes and sexual ambiguity.[6] The gender roles one encounters in Kālidāsa's work are an entirely different story. An explicit canon of female beauty, a standard for every body part, has developed, and the physical ideal is one that unfits the woman for much activity; the man in the meantime obviously displays the physical signs of his active life. Just one example: the ideal woman has breasts so large that their weight impedes her movement and threatens to snap her tiny waist; the man has the scars of the bowstring on his wrists from his constant soldiering.

It is instructive to compare two stories with central female characters that both were treated by Kālidāsa and appear in earlier versions: the dramas of Śakuntalā and of Urvaśī.[7] Kālidāsa's Śakuntalā may be the most famous piece of (nonreligious) Indian literature outside of India; it is also the subject of a narrative in the first book of the Mahābhārata (I.62-69).[8] The story is basically the same in both: King Duḥṣanta comes to a hermitage in the forest containing a beautiful and currently unprotected girl. They engage in a spontaneous but nonetheless legal union. He goes back to the court. She gets pregnant, has a son, takes him to the royal court to be legally recognized. Duḥṣanta repudiates her, but everything turns out in the end—the wife accepted, the heir officially acknowledged.

The Śakuntalā of the epic is a strong-minded girl, distinguished by her learning in the law. Before she sleeps with the king, she evades his verbal tricks and insists on extracting an agreement to recognize any child of the

union as heir. When he reneges on his promise, she gives him a tongue-lashing in the middle of his court, and he surrenders. The Śakuntalā of Kālidāsa is at first too awed by the king to speak to him; when she falls in love, she also falls into an almost catatonic languor; and when she is later rejected by the king (not by his own fault, in this version), she simply slinks away. It takes the intervention of numerous divine events to bring about the happy ending. The play is a wonderful piece of poetry, but the bleaching of Śakuntalā's character from her epic model is unsettling to some of us.

The story of the nymph Urvaśī and her mortal lover Purūravas goes back to the Rig Veda (RV X.95).[9] In that text, Urvaśī tires of life on earth with the cloddish Purūravas, rather harshly rejects him, and returns to the more engaging activities of her fellow nymphs, leaving her child behind. Though even subsequent *Vedic* versions[10] find this blithe independence a bit too radical and endow Urvaśī with more affection for her man than the RV allows, it takes Kālidāsa to turn her into a tremulous ingenue whose timid passion for Purūravas is her chief characteristic and her downfall.

Another sharp dichotomy one finds in the work of Kālidāsa is that between town, especially the royal court, and country, especially the *āśramas,* or hermitages of ascetics. If there was ever any truth in the old comparisons between Shakespeare and Kālidāsa, it may lie here—in the "Forest of Arden" atmosphere that repairing to a hermitage often seems to evoke. Even my brief plot summary above of the Śakuntalā suggests the polarization between the simple and serene life of nature found in the hermits' retreat and the more complex and ambiguous world of the royal court, and a reading of the play only reinforces this impression. Kālidāsa's famous short poem, the Meghadūta or Cloud-messenger,[11] alternates descriptions of the rural and urban landscapes over which the cloud floats while proceeding north, each with their salient characteristics and typical inhabitants, thus producing a global view of the imperial domain.

This polarization of landscape and lifestyle has complex sources—one of them, no doubt, being sheer reality: the development of urban centers and urban institutions. But I would suggest the schema of dichotomy, the construction of dichotomy as a model, which I derive ultimately from the linguistic situation, is at work here as well. The country and the city represent two extremes, with nothing in between, two incompatible choices that one can shuttle between but not reconcile. And these choices have their social and religious counterparts. Each physical location is the province of a major division of Indic society: the town that of the Kṣatriyas, the old warrior class, and their leader the king, the country that of the priestly class, the Brahmans.

This functional polarization of landscape has roots in earlier literature, but it is not clearly expressed until the classical era. In the epics, the country

is often simply the place of exile: where the Pāṇḍavas are sent for twelve years in the MBh after the dicing match, where Rāma and Sītā are sent in the Rāmāyaṇa after his brother's coronation—a hostile and lonely place. Though the activities and attractions of the *āśrama* are sometimes depicted in the epics, they do not usually function as a counterweight to the town.[12] (We will note an exception below.)

Descriptions of the physical features of landscapes and of natural events, like the sunset, become very important in classical *kāvya.* In fact, a certain number of these descriptions are required set pieces in the "great *kāvya*s" *(mahākāvya),* according to the poetic theorists (e.g., Daṇḍin). I am not entirely certain why this is so, or what connection it has with the polarization just discussed, but it is curious that the natural landscape set-piece seems to make its first appearance in the Rāmāyaṇa, often known as the *ādikāvya,* or "first *kāvya,*" whereas in the MBh for the most part landscape is a sketchy stage set for action or the occasion for telling stories traditionally associated with particular places.[13] Perhaps the development of a "town consciousness" divorced from the natural landscape brought the physical features of the latter especially in view. Nature only becomes "picturesque" and worthy of description when it is no longer the unexamined setting of daily life. Perhaps, too, it was a by-product of empire building: explicit notice-taking of the variety of lands belonging to the kingdom.

We have been talking for some time about polarization, the first part of the paradigm I established above. Let us now turn to isolation, a feature particularly characteristic of the *style* of classical literature. Again I would generate this feature from the linguistic model: just as there is no continuum in language behavior, but sharp breaks, and just as Sanskrit, the language of high literature, is isolated from ordinary life, so the poetic impulse seems devoted to producing single, isolable effects. It is a commonplace among Indologists that the stanza, a verse consisting of four lines, is the archetypal unit of *kāvya,* that each stanza is independent, and devices linking them, even in larger poems, are rudimentary and often half-hearted. Each verse should be a little, perfect poem, and any unity found in the larger work is the unity of separate beads on a string. I think this view is overstated, especially for the works of Kālidāsa, but it is far from untrue. In later classical times, lengthy anthologies were compiled consisting only of single verses, each artistically a complete poem.[14]

The goal of isolation in literary style also accounts for one of the most important features of poetic theory, first applied to drama (earlier than purely poetic theory, as we saw above). The so-called theory of *rasa,* or flavor, classifies human emotions into a small, finite set and seeks to allow the audience of a play to "taste" the emotions (without suffering the emotional effects).

For my argument, the important feature of this theory is that only one *rasa* should *predominate* in a particular work, and even though several *rasa*s can be portrayed in the course of a single work, they should come one at a time, with their appropriate signals and trappings (all of which are discussed in detail in the theoretical works).

The concision and isolating of effects I have just noted can also be perceived in a different way, by comparing two functionally parallel episodes in the Śakuntalā of the Mahābhārata and of Kālidāsa. Each concerns the initial entrance of the king into the *āśrama* where he is to meet Śakuntalā for the first time. In each work, the entrance sets up a mood of dislocation and otherworldliness, one of the places in the MBh where the town/country dichotomy is employed for dramatic effect. In the MBh, the dislocation is brought about by an extended series of descriptive verses (MBh I.63-64, nearly seventy four-line verses), first of the tremendous carnage of the king's hunt, then of the serenity of the hermitage: the trees and flowers, the birds, the river, the chanting of the priests, the fire, and so on (again an unusual awareness of landscape for this epic). In the play, in a single verse the king describes the distortions of his vision watching the landscape go by from his speeding chariot:

—ak. I.9 Tiny things suddenly loom,
Things split unite behind us,
Crooked things stream into straight lines—
Nothing stays distant at this speed, and nothing stays near.[15]

The effect is the same: to remove the king not only physically but perceptually from his own milieu. The epic produces this effect by expansion, the drama by contraction.

My last use of my linguistic model will be the most obvious one. Sanskrit in the classical era, the classical moment, involves a self-conscious revival, a deliberate appropriation of the language of an earlier era, and a way to restore the gold of a *previous* golden age. Given the cyclic notion of time in ancient India, *the* classical moment is but the regular return of *a* classical moment from the past.[16] The conservatism of the early Guptas, their conscious harking back to previous days of imperial glory, specifically from the Mauryan empire of the fourth to the second century B.C., and the revival of "customs of the Hindu and the Vedic past"[17], have frequently been commented on.

This revival was also characteristic of classical literature. The old Vedic gods, their characteristics and exploits, supply a constant source of motifs, of comparanda, and even of plot lines. The religious rituals of the Vedic age, especially the Coronation of the King (Rājasūya) and the regal Horse Sacrifice (Aśvamedha), are performed again and again in the imaginative lit-

erature. This Vedic layer is often considered just a superficial decorative gloss on works expressive of a different, "Hindu" religious sensibility. But I have recently argued that it can be much more in Kālidāsa—a covert structuring device for larger sections of poetic works and, more important, a way in which to appropriate the remembered glory of the Vedic era as a support for newer religious and cultural figures. For example, in Kālidāsa's famous *mahākāvya* Kumārasaṃbhava,[18] the prestige of the original Indic victory myth, that of Indra over Vṛtra, is co-opted and transferred, covertly, to the new dominant deity—Śiva in his victory over the god of love, Kāma.[19]

This creative nostalgia of poets like Kālidāsa does suggest that the classical moment is one that represents not a break from the past, but a re-creation and re-configuring of the past, to serve the present. And this may further suggest why the classical moment happened at just this point in Indian history. Many of the elements had been in place for some time: the revival of Sanskrit had been under way for several centuries; some of the themes, such as the interest in landscape, are found already in the Rāmāyaṇa and even in embryo in the Mahābhārata; many of the features of *kāvya* style are present already in the Rāmāyaṇa, in the early Sanskrit inscriptions, and in the works of the second-century A.D. Buddhist poet Aśvaghoṣa. But perhaps not until the early Guptas was the need felt to construct a working model of the past on which the present could be superimposed and from which the present could appropriate its imaginative power. And, I would submit, this working model of the past is primarily controlled by and generated from the Sanskrit language and its own peculiar relationship to both past and present.

Notes

I have benefited from discussion of these issues not only with the other contributors to this volume, but also with T. Burke, C. Z. Minkowski, and K. McGrath, among others—though not all my opinions are shared by all.

1. I somewhat defiantly continue to use A.D. rather than C.E. and B.C. rather than B.C.E., since it seems to me more honest about the Western bias of such dates. Though C.E. may be an acceptable substitute in Near Eastern research, for India the notion of "Common Era" is not applicable.

2. A very useful survey of the poet and his milieu is found in Daniel H. H. Ingalls, "Kālidāsa and the Attitudes of the Golden Age," *JAOS* 96 (1967) 15-26.

3. See L. Renou, "Sûr la structure du kāvya," *JA* 247 (1959) 1-113, especially 1, 5, 7, 9, 11, 26-7, 29-30, 48-9, 61-2, 69.

4. Save for the lazy and gluttonous Brahman sidekick of the king, the stock figure of the Vidūṣaka.

5. These epics took shape over a long period of time and continued to be added to, but the central period of composition and redaction is generally considered to be approximately 200 B.C.-A.D. 200.

6. E.g., Śikhandin, a woman reborn as (not quite) a man to take revenge on her abductor (MBh V.189-93); King Bhagāśvana (MBh XIII.12), who emerges from a swim as a woman, in consequence of a curse, and chooses to remain one because women's sexual pleasure is greater than men's.

7. Available in English translation in B. S. Miller, ed., *Theatre of Memory: The Plays of Kālidāsa* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).

8. For English translation of the first five books of the MBh, see J. A. B. van Buitenen, *The Mahābhārata* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, I, 1973; II-III, 1975; IV-V, 1978).

9. An English translation is available in W. O'Flaherty, *The Rig Veda* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1981), 252-6 though, given the difficulty of the hymn, much in it is disputable.

10. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa XI.5.1. *The Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa, Part V: Sacred Books of the East,* vol. 44, trans., J. Eggeling, Baudhāyana Śrauta Sūtra XVIII (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1882-1900), 44-45.

11. F. and E. Edgerton, trans., *The Cloud Messenger* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1964).

12. However, this polarization begins to be clear already in the Buddhacarita of the second century A.D. Buddhist dramatist Aśvaghoṣa, especially in the visit to the hermitage (act. 7). *The Buddhacarita or Acts of the Buddha,* trans., E. H. Johnson, (1936) (New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1972).

13. *Tīrthas* (sacred fords) are especially the occasion for stories. Cf. the tour of the *tīrthas* in MBh III.80-153 Note also that the country setting of Rāma's exile is extensively described in the R (book III), that of the Pāṇḍavas in the MBh hardly at all.

14. Cf. e.g., *Vidyākara's Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa,* trans. by D. H. H. Ingalls as *An Anthology of Sanskrit Court Poetry,* vol. 44 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965).

15. M. Coulson, trans., *Three Sanskrit Plays* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1981), 44.

16. C. Minkowski, personal communication with the author.

17. Ingalls,"*Kālidāsa* and the Attitudes," 16.

18. H. Heifetz, trans., *The Origin of the Young God: Kālidāsa's Kumārasaṃbhava* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

19. "*'Vṛtra et Vṛbragna' and 'Sur la structure du kāvya':* Some intersections," *Langue, style et structure dans le monde indien,* Centenaire de Louis Renou, ed. N. Balbir and G. Pinault, (Paris: Librairie H. Champion, 1996), 123-42.

Woodblock from an 1867 edition of the *Shi jing* (variously translated as "Book of Songs" or "Classic of Poetry").

CHAPTER FOUR

The Classical Moment in China

Paul Rouzer

"Traditional" Chinese literary history covers an extraordinarily long period, stretching from around the eighth century B.C. until the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911. During this time, Chinese civilization went through frequent periods of profound change during which the very nature of what constituted "literature" shifted and the canons of taste were rewritten. Unfortunately, we are only beginning to write the histories of these shifts and to break down the stereotyped conception of an "unchanging China." To define what "classical moments" occur and recur throughout the past two thousand years would take a much longer study, and I can only begin a long and complicated story here by focusing on the early period. I fear what follows will be too detailed for those who desire a big picture and too simplistic for others, but I hope I will touch on issues interesting enough to inspire those unfamiliar with early China to explore further.[1]

In 213 B.C., eight years after the powerful and ruthless state of Qin had conquered all of the other independent states of the Chinese cultural sphere and had established the first unified empire, the First Emperor (*Shi Huang*) held a banquet to which he invited famous scholars of the land. These men, sometimes known as *bo shi,* or "scholars of wide learning," were versed in the texts that supposedly embodied the political and ethical codes of the archaic Zhou government, the polity that had had nominal moral authority over the Chinese ecumene since the twelfth century B.C. but that had ceased to exert any real power since the eighth. As the *bo shi* came forward to praise the First Emperor for uniting China into one empire and for bringing peace to a troubled world, an argument broke out among them. In particular, one of their number, Shunyu Yue, protested the Qin's authoritarian policies, arguing that the earlier ruling houses of the Shang and Zhou had long maintained a rule of virtue in the world through decentralization and the enfeoffment of noble ministers and royal relatives (rather than through the intense bureaucratization and standardization of administration characteristic of Qin rule). At this point, the First Emperor's chief minister, Li Si, interrupted. Dismissing Shunyu's arguments as rooted in a useless scholar's obsessive concern for precedents that no longer applied to current situations, he went on to condemn the *bo shi* tradition in general, arguing that its constant reference to a

golden Zhou past merely created disharmony and demoralization. Now that a unified state had come into being, individual philosophical debates on the proper form of government must give way to a strong imperial policy. Li Si then went on to recommend that private copies of the *bo shi* texts (as well as the texts of other philosophical schools) be confiscated and burned; the traditions of the past would be preserved only in the imperial library.[2]

Implementation of Li Si's proposal—the so-called Burning of the Books—seems to have brought about major cultural and ideological changes among the Chinese elite. On the one hand, it can be interpreted as a not-so-surprising attempt by a centralized government to create a monopoly over cultural capital and to maintain control over political dissent. Up until the Qin unification of 221 B.C., political argumentation in China was as complex and heated as the violent wars that broke out among the feudal states themselves. The various philosophical schools (most of them concerned with problems of administration and public policy) had strongly regional bases and were thus often connected with the special interests of certain states. The founders of the schools produced lineages of pupils who memorized the discourses of their teachers from generation to generation and who competed for positions as advisors to various rulers; and the rulers depended on such advisors for policies that would enable their own states to prosper and to conquer their neighbors. The First Emperor understandably saw philosophical discourse as a direct threat to his rule.

More importantly, however, the Burning of the Books was a mythic formative moment in the self-created history of the Confucian tradition. Li Si went out of his way to vent his ire upon *bo shi* traditionalists who revered the past. These men traced their moral authority not merely to an idealized early Zhou utopia but to the first synthesizer of such attitudes, Confucius (trad. 551-479 B.C.). It was Confucius, they believed, who had edited the corpus of early Zhou literary materials into a series of significant "classics" that the Qin went on to burn. It was this tradition of scholars, of course, that later came to represent what we now call Confucianism—vague as that term is. The Burning constituted an irreversible break between past and present for later Confucians; it threatened the transmission of the sacred texts and made problematic the tie between imperial, post-Qin Confucianism and the supposedly more perfect traditions of an earlier era. Of course, the Qin fell almost immediately through the ambition and ruthlessness of its own policies; but when the warlord Xiang Yu burned the imperial library in 206 B.C., the only "legal" copies of the Confucian classics were probably lost, leaving it up to independent *bo shi* to reconstitute the texts and the traditions. This enterprise began in the second century B.C., under Qin's successor empire, the Han (207 B.C. –

220 A.D.). Though the Han deemphasized the radical centralizing policies of its predecessor, it inherited Qin's interest in unifying and to some extent monopolizing cultural and philosophical discourse—in its own case, through the patronization of talented *bo shi* whose tasks were to standardize and transmit commentary on the pre-Qin texts. The Han thus succeeded where the Qin had failed. Though it tended to encourage, not eliminate, scholarly debates on issues of interpretation and textual variance, it made the stamp of imperial approval on one's own school an important goal for any *bo shi.*

These factors make it possible for us to identify the Han as a "classical" period in Chinese cultural development, at least from the perspective of our discussions.[3] The Burning of the Books compelled a self-reflective and postlapsarian mentality toward the past; interpretation became a means toward recapturing the past, and hence recapturing in some inferior sense a lost virtue. However, the lasting establishment of a centralized empire under the Han meant that educated Chinese would never again view their own civilization as a disparate group of culturally diverse states at war with one another, but would believe in the political unity of the Chinese cultural enterprise. The texts of the past (particularly those of the increasingly prestigious Confucian scholars) would no longer belong to one school or one state, but to all educated Chinese.

Interpreting the Uninterpretable

Our attention now turns to the role this "classical" mentality played in creating a canon out of precanonical material. Perhaps the most interesting text to pursue in seeking out the "classical moment" would be the *Shi jing* (variously translated as "Book of Songs" or "Classic of Poetry"), a collection of 305 short to medium-length songs that date from a period rougly seven to three centuries before the Qin unification.[4] Though revered by Confucian scholars even before the Qin as a corpus of poetry from the golden age of early Zhou, the version that is transmitted to us today derives from editions compiled by interpretative schools during the Han, who believed that they were reconstituting an original classic edited by Confucius himself.[5] Since most modern Chinese and Western scholars have argued that many of the poems of the *Shi jing* betray a "folk" origin to some degree, the way in which the *Shi jing* is interpreted to accommodate elite interests and to speak for elite concerns may be seen as the ne plus ultra of the Chinese classical moment. However, the task is not quite so easy as it might seem; it implies our ability to relocate the *Shi jing* songs in a "pre-Confucian" context. We will soon discover that the

act of recuperating and thus understanding a preclassical *Shi jing* will always remain problematic if not impossible, not only because of questions that must remain unanswered about its origins, but because such an enterprise is already ideologically weighted within the Chinese tradition itself.

Whereas to some degree most of us interested in interpreting a classical moment in traditional elite cultures would admit that such an interpretative act derives from peculiarly twentieth-century interests in both the sociology and history of competing power groups, the Chinese "literati" tradition has often been aware of the degree to which it has borrowed from "folk" elements.[6] In fact, the adoption of folk or popular genres by elites in traditional China has often been taken as the most widespread and typical feature of the literature, with the result that an articulation of such an awareness usually constitutes a highly loaded ideological weapon in debates over what literature should be. For example, by the last Ming dynasty (the seventeenth century), the acknowledgment of the "folk origins" of literary genres had grown into a conscious intellectual stance among many reformist literati, who upheld popular art forms (in their own age, popular song and fiction) as an expression of greater sincerity, spontaneity, and moral sensitivity than the "decadent" productions of their own class (mostly poetry and prose essay). For a critic like Jin Shengtan (1610-1661), the great works of his culture grew out of early literatus/folk interaction, and he argued that even many of the great, canonical products of the early classical period arose with the same force of novelty and freshness that the popular novels of his own day exhibited.[7] Closer to our own age, the "May Fourth" generation of intellectuals,[8] in revolt against the "repressive" moral strictures of a stale "Confucianism" (in particular, its control of private life, sexual behavior, and the lives of women), often attempted to rewrite the traditional history of literature by privileging "folk" works that were perceived as close to an oral storytelling tradition and as more outspoken in their treatment of individuality and sexual behavior; some of them (on somewhat dubious grounds) reinterpreted the elite written language as the Latin of China, and saw the adoption in popular literature of *baihua* (modern Northern spoken dialect) as a development equivalent to the adoption of the vernacular in European countries during the late Medieval and Renaissance periods.[9] Though these reinterpretations could be seen as adaptations of stock Western assumptions of literary history (particularly of the post romantic, "organic" kind that saw folk literature as the most fundamental product of national identity), they were to some extent merely amplifying a strain of literatus thought present for centuries. In her discussion of the rise of drama in the thirteenth century, Chung-wen Shih gives a typical survey of folk/literatus interaction from the May Fourth perspective:

> Popular songs have traditionally provided the impetus for the development of important new poetic genres in Chinese literary history. For example, many of the poems in the Book of Poetry originated in folk songs from the early Zhou period, while much of the great early lyric poetry from the Han and the following period of disunion reflects the themes, figures, and techniques of the popular ballad tradition. During the Tang [619-907 A.D.] period, great poets looked to the tunes sung by singing girls, probably influenced by musical modes from Central Asia, for models offering more varied prosody and fresher expression, and this led to the development of *ci* [song lyrics]. As the Song [960-1275] *ci* became more self-consciously "literary," the desire to transcend the formal and stereotyped led to the rise of another genre. Under the occupation of Northern China by the Liao and Jin, and the eventual conquest by the Mongols, a great number of new tunes were introduced. Poets making use of this contemporary music composed lyrics which resulted in yet another form, the *qu* [lyrics used in drama].[10]

Shih's catalogue here is an encapsulated history of Chinese literature as it is often interpreted in the twentieth century; yet the exact role of the "folk" in each of these genres is a complex one, as more contemporary scholarship has begun to demonstrate.[11] What Shih's account tends to take for granted is that in the case of each literary genre, a true "folk" tradition could be discerned in works that survive up until the present, and that folk elements were adopted by some of the more "open-minded" literati, who detected the promise of the new genre. Moreover, she implies that (although this is rarely expressed explicitly) the best examples of each genre ultimately come from literati adaptations.

This last, often unstated assumption draws us closer to the motivations implied in earlier literati acknowledgment of "folk" influences. It is thus my responsibility here not merely to chronicle the appearance of the classical moment in ancient China (or, one might say, its constant reappearance), but to address as well the question of why educated Chinese readers would find it important to foreground it themselves. In other words, is the recognition of a classical moment itself a constituent part of elite, hegemonic ideology? Are there motives for wanting to construct and display a classical moment?

These issues must first be addressed by investigating how *Shi jing* poems were first used in elite discourse even before the Han. In doing so, we immediately see how such usage has obfuscated the text's preclassical (i.e., pre-Qin) origins. Our earliest extrinsic knowledge of the poems occurs through their quotation in philosophical and historical texts, as well as the mention of poem titles—most strikingly in the *Analects (Lunyu),* a collection of sayings attributed to Confucius, and in the *Commentary of Master Zuo (Zuo*

zhuan), a history of the disparate states of the Chinese world from the period circa 750-500. Already by this time, it would seem, a body of poems were circulating among the educated and were known simply as "the songs" (*shi*). The most striking aspect of individual line quotation in the *Analects* and the *Zuo Commentary* is its employment in rhetorical argument to illustrate a point, often seemingly at the expense of the line's original meaning and context. Song quotations were the rhetorician's tool for effective speech (both persuading and moving its audience) and as proof of erudition. At this early state, the collective body of songs may also have provided an easily memorizable method of mastering the language itself. Except for an expert class of scribes that kept records for the rulers of the states and their courts, literacy (in terms of possessing the competence of copying down substantial passages of text) may still have been relatively limited even among the elites, and literary composition as well as philosophical debate may still mostly have been an oral phenomenon.[12]

Thus, Confucius at one point emphasizes the practical, educational value found in learning the "songs":

> The Master said, "Why is it none of you, my young friends, study the *Odes*? An apt quotation from the *Odes* may serve to stimulate the imagination, to show one's breeding, to smooth over difficulties in a group and to give expression to complaints.
>
> "[As for what the *Odes* can teach:] Inside the family there is the serving of one's father; outside, there is the serving of one's lord; there is also the acquiring of a wide knowledge of the names of birds and beasts, plants and trees."[13]

An even more interesting usage may be observed in the *Zuo Commentary.* Emissaries between the states would often chant familiar songs to each other to cement friendships and alliances and to ease relations at official banquets and ceremonies. The *Zuo Commentary* occasionally dramatizes such activities by positioning a wise minister in the wings, who makes observations and predictions concerning the emissaries' motives and fates based on the poems they have chosen to chant. While this type of moral prophecy may be attributed to the "Confucian" point of view of a history written several centuries after the events it purports to describe, the actual practice of diplomatic quotation exchange likely did exist as social practice in the early courts. Thus, as a result of its importance in diplomacy and among Confucius's disciples, the body of poems we recognize now as the *Shi jing* seems to have gradually stabilized (though it probably never stabilized completely). The text must have been written down in some form, in spite of the undoubtedly greater emphasis upon oral transmission.

I have gone into this discussion of song use before actually discussing the content of the *Shi jing* poems as we have them today in order to lay the groundwork for analyzing histories of *Shi jing* interpretation. It is usually suggested that the *Analects* and the *Zuo Commentary* demonstrate that the "true spirit" of the *Shi jing* had already been violated in this pre-Qin period, that their original meanings as folk poems had been deliberately distorted or ignored, and that the texts were moving into the realm of elite knowledge and (eventually) canonization as the Confucian moral anthology. This is true to a certain extent—certainly a historical sense of how the poems are cited from Confucius's time up until the Han does suggest an increasing interest in moralizing the contents, making the poems speak for or illustrate some ethical principle. However, part of the problem of interpreting the practice of song quotation lies in the difficulty of knowing the origins of the songs to begin with. Did an early quoter of the songs think in terms of an original author whose lines he was deliberately citing? Or did he see the songs as a vague corpus of poetic material that became his own when he quoted from it? What does it mean to "make" poems in this early period? And do the texts as we have them today represent to some degree an educated scholar's "fixing" of the amorphous and ambiguous corpus that was generally known in the early period? And could such an editor conceive that such an act was interfering with the integrity of the text in our modern sense? Since these are problems familiar to modern scholars of oral poetry, readers will know the problematic involved.

I will put aside the possibilities of editorial "fixing" of the songs for the time being, and will address the issue of the concept of authorship later in my discussion. However, a few other distinctive issues remain to be addressed. An intelligent examination of the *Shi jing* songs suggests that they are much less "folksy" in subject matter than we are sometimes led to believe by twentieth-century viewpoints. Some songs are ceremonial dynastic hymns, apparently used in ritual ceremonies; some are semihistorical and mythical narratives of the founding of the early dynastic houses, probably also intended for ritual use; some suggest a sophisticated bardic tradition; and some are elaborate satires on political issues. The part of the text that tends to attract modern readers looking for folk traditions is the *feng* (or *Airs*) section, the first 160 poems. Many of these deal with aspects of agrarian life and with courtship and marriage. However, when we examine the *Airs* at greater length, three particular points are worthy of notice. First, a very large number of the poems in the *Airs* still seem to be concerned with royalty and with the politics of state (e.g., epithalamia describing the marriage of state rulers, or descriptions of banquets). Second, a large number of the poems demand a context of

a cultural/ritual nature that we can only guess at. Third, little enough is known of Zhou social structure for us to be sure where the dividing line even is between "elite" and "populace" (or if it is even meaningful to create such a line). Obviously, Confucian disciples and court emissaries who quoted the poems were in some sense members of an elite, but how did they interact with "the people"?

The first point needs little comment. The second point must be emphasized, particularly to those who might be unaware of the exceedingly vague nature of Chinese poetic language. Pronouns are not frequently used in *Shi jing* poems, and the ones that are used are often of indeterminate gender. Many *Airs* describe some sort of ceremony that we do not understand, while others seem to have been composed for some personal event (either joyous or catastrophic) that can no longer be recovered. Many poems use individual words in ways so peculiar or vague in relation to their later meanings as to suggest that major dialect and cultural changes occurred between their composition and the beginnings of the classical era of the Han. Of course there are *Airs* that seem so close to similar poems in other countries' folk traditions that we are probably on firm ground in guessing their purpose, at least within the frame of a comparative anthropology. But many are far more problematic than is generally realized. Let me give a brief example. If I were to render *Shi jing* number 64 in a way that would do justice to its vagueness, it would sound something like this:

> Tossed to me a quince,
> Repaid with a precious *ju*-gem;
> It was not that I repaid—
> Forever by this create amity.
>
> Tossed to me a peach,
> Repaid with a precious *yao*-gem;
> It was not that I repaid—
> Forever by this create amity.
>
> Tossed to me a plum,
> Repaid with a precious *jiu*-gem;
> It was not that I repaid—
> Forever by this create amity.

Arthur Waley, whose excellent translation of the *Shi jing* is familiar to many, almost always takes the anthropological view of the poems characteristic of much Chinese and Western *Shi jing* scholarship in this century. He is usually confident about having reached the "correct" interpretation and is quite sure

that this one in particular is a courtship poem (in fact, Waley sees almost all of the *Airs* as such poems):

> She threw a quince to me;
> In requital I gave a bright girdle-gem.
> No, not just as a requital;
> But meaning I would love her forever.
>
> She threw a tree-peach to me;
> As requital I gave her a bright greenstone.
> No, not just as requital;
> But meaning I would love her forever.
>
> She threw a tree-plum to me;
> In requital I gave her a bright jet-stone.
> No, not just as requital,
> But meaning I would love her forever.[14]

However, there has been much room for debate over this interpretation. Some modern Chinese commentators (most of them also hostile to "moralizing" the poems) point out that an oath of friendship may be implied here, or an exchange of gifts between families. The erudite scholar and writer Qian Zhongshu suggested that the poem may have played a part in a competitive ceremony of gift exchange in which the honor of competing individuals or households is at stake (deriving inspiration from Marcel Mauss's discussion of the potlatch).[15] Such interpretations, valid though they are, have tended not to be as popular as Waley's, for reasons that may have much to do with modern interests, East and West (even though the "love-gift" idea was present in some pre-modern interpretations), first, because we have tended to revolt against the perceived "moralistic" interpretations of Confucian commentators; and second, because we are desperate to communicate with the unrepresented "private" world of early Zhou culture, especially with the lives and experiences of women and commoners in that culture. The *Shi jing,* after all, is one of the few places in the early Chinese literary tradition where female "authorship" seems a possibility. At the very least, many of the poems do describe activities of women that otherwise would go unrecorded. Unfortunately, we must admit that we are still in the realm of conjecture. Even in the poems that obviously are about women or in the voice of women, the question of *what they are doing* is still almost entirely unanswerable much of the time.[16]

My third point (concerning the class structure of China at the time of the poems' composition) must not be overlooked, because in a society where the elites put less emphasis on written texts, oral compositional techniques and

bardic traditions (some of them of a quite sophisticated nature) will most probably exist at all social levels. While C. H. Wang has demonstrated that many of the *Airs* were likely composed with techniques similar to those demonstrated by Parry and Lord (formulaic lines, repetitions in similar situations, stock metaphors),[17] it does not necessarily follow (as Wang himself knew) that a formulaic poem is the product of "folk culture," as opposed to the more "sophisticated" (literate?) elite. As I suggested above, the formulaic nature of the poetry would have made the verses easy to remember and also easy to modify, employ, take apart, or recompose for various situations. When Confucius says that the songs "may serve to stimulate the imagination, to show one's breeding, to smooth over difficulties in a group and to give expression to complaints," he is suggesting another important aspect of songs' usage—the fact that they typologically embody within themselves certain manifestations of social relations and can be quoted to help express those relations. Quotation out of context does not then represent a stealing or a misunderstanding, but a recognition of some emotional "truth" the poem represents independent of any context for which it might have first been composed (and due to the flexibility of texts, such a positing of a "first context" has only a vague theoretical significance).

There is one important development, however, that begins to make itself felt in elite responses to song quotation toward the end of the archaic period (circa fourth century B.C.): while the song fragments that we have embodied in quotation seem to move freely in subject matter from farmers singing in their fields to court poets composing satires on political affairs, nonetheless a substantial number of poems that are quoted by the "elite" are interpreted by them as "the people's" reaction to elite policy. A sensitivity to the "public poll" potential of poetry is manifested, and it is thought that the people have some sort of spontaneous folk wisdom that enables them to arrive at just and pithy critiques of the ruler's action. However, this awareness (seen most prominently in the sayings of Confucius's later follower Mencius) tends to recognize "the people" as a composing entity only in the realm of social criticism.

Historicization

The next major state in *Shi jing* interpretation and use occurs after the textual reconstruction of the text in the early Han; during the second and first centuries B.C., a number of competing schools of Confucian *Shi jing* interpretation vied for imperial recognition. By the end of the dynasty (the second century A.D.), the commentaries and interpretations of the Mao family won out and became more or less official interpretative orthodoxy until the rise of the neo-

Confucian movement in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The major change that the Mao commentaries introduced was that they attempted to specify an exact historical event as the "inspiration" for each *Shi jing* song; that is, they attempted to explain the historical context to each poem, a context that is always tied to a significant event in the elite political and moral history of the Zhou dynasty and its component states. Each song is preceded by a brief "preface" that explains how the song was inspired; almost all of the prefaces describe the singer's motivation as the need to "praise" (*mei*) or "blame" (*ci*) elite political conduct. Two brief examples of their strategy should illuminate its method and significance. First, let us return to poem 64, "Quince," discussed above. The preface reads as follows:

> "Quince" praises Duke Huan of Qi. When the state of Wei had been defeated by the Di barbarians and the ruler fled to Cao in exile, Duke Huan of Qi rescued him and enfeoffed him. The Duke [also] presented him with chariots and horses, utensils and clothes. The people of Wei thought of the Duke with gratitude and wished to repay him generously; and so they composed the poem.[18]

Needless to say, it takes some further elucidation to show how the poem fits into this reading exactly. The seventh-century subcommentator Kong Yingda explained it thus:

> Because the people of Wei had obtained great merit from Huan of Qi, they longed to repay him generously, and yet they could not; and so they made use of a trivial example to speak of it: "If Qi were to throw us a quince, we would want to repay him—yet we cannot. Even if we could repay him with a girdle gem, we would still not dare [to consider] such a girdle gem as repayment for Qi's quince. We could only hope that Qi would take pleasure in it and so be tied to us in his affectionate thoughts."[19]

It may seem convoluted to the modern reader, but this reading attempts to make the seemingly private exchange of the quince and the gem the reflection of a historically and morally pregnant moment in Zhou history. A more complicated situation occurs with poem 76, "I beg of you, Master Zhong."

> I beg of you, Master Zhong,
> Do not climb into our homestead.
> Do not break the willows we have planted.
> Not that I mind about the willows,
> But I am afraid of my father and mother.
> Master Zhong I dearly love;
> But of what my father and mother say
> Indeed I am afraid.

I beg of you, Master Zhong,
Do not climb over our wall,
Do not break the mulberry-trees we have planted.
Not that I mind about the mulberry-trees,
But I am afraid of my brothers.
Master Zhong I dearly love;
But of what my brothers say
Indeed I am afraid.

I beg of you, Master Zhong,
Do not climb into our garden,
Do not break the hard-wood we have planted.
Not that I mind about the hard-wood,
But I am afraid of what people will say.
Master Zhong I dearly love;
But of all that people will say
Indeed I am afraid.[20]

What modern readers have made of this is easy to guess: a girl restrains her overly enthusiastic lover by threatening him with discovery by her parents, then by her (perhaps physically intimidating) brothers, then by the community at large. Perhaps the widening of the disapproving circle from stanza to stanza reflects her increasing desperation as the lover approaches nearer. Again, we read this way in the present almost instinctually, based on a folkloristic interpretation.[21] But gender is still indeterminable in the original.

The Mao preface, however, again connects this song to specific historical circumstances:

> "I beg of you Master Zhong" criticizes Duke Zhuang [of the state of Zheng]. He would not overcome [his respect for] his mother in order to harm his younger brother. His younger brother the Taishu was remiss in his conduct and yet the Duke would not control him. [The Duke's advisor] Zhai Zhong remonstrated with the Duke but the Duke would not heed his advice. The Duke could not bear [to do] a small thing and thus brought about great disorder.

The events in question here are related at great length in the *Zuo Commentary*:

> In the past, Duke Wu of Zheng had taken a bride from the state of Shen, known as Lady Jiang of Duke Wu. Lady Jiang gave birth to the future Duke Zhuang and to his brother, Duan of Gong. Duke Zhuang was born wide awake and consequently greatly startled Lady Jiang. Therefore she named him Born Awake and came to hate him. But she loved his younger brother Duan and wished to have

> him declared heir to the throne of Zheng. Repeatedly she begged Duke Wu to do so, but he would not agree.
>
> Later, when Duke Zhuang became ruler of Zheng [743 B.C.], Lady Jiang . . . requested that Duan be given the city of Jing, and he was accordingly sent to reside there. He came to be called the Taishu or Grand Younger Brother of Jing City.

At this point, one of the duke's advisors, Zhai Zhong, warns the Duke that Jing City is larger than is safe for a vassal's fortress. The duke claims filiality as his defense:

> The duke said, "Lady Jiang would have it that way—how can I avoid the danger?"
>
> "There is no end to what Lady Jiang would have!" replied Zhai Zhong. "Better tend to the matter at once and not let it grow and put out runners, for runners can be hard to control. If even plants that have put out runners cannot be rooted out, how much more so the favored younger brother of a ruler!"
>
> The duke said, "If he does too many things that are not right, he is bound to bring ruin on himself. I suggest you wait awhile."

As Zhai Zhong predicts, the Taishu carries out a number of actions that suggest he is laying the groundwork for a coup. Other advisors of the Duke continue to warn him, but to no avail. Finally:

> The Taishu completed the building of his walls, called together his men, mended his armor and weapons, equipped his foot soldiers and chariots, and prepared for a surprise attack on the capital of Zheng. Lady Jiang was to open the city to him. When the duke learned the date planned for the attack, he said, "Now is the time!" He ordered the ducal son Lü to lead a force of two hundred chariots and attack Jing. Jing turned against the Taishu Duan, who took refuge in Yan.[22]

The duke thus saves his dukedom. A reader of the *Zuo Commentary* might imagine that this story portrays the duke in a favorable light: he displays proper filiality to his mother and trust in his own brother, in spite of his increasingly transparent scheming. Only when he has no choice does he turn against them. However, the Mao commentator reads the events differently: the duke owes greater allegiance to the safety of his kingdom. For Mao, the poem is spoken in the *voice* of the duke as he fends off the increasingly anxious remonstrations of his advisor, Zhai Zhong , but must have been *composed* by a third, independent observer of the events (hence the preface's statement "'I beg of you Master Zhong' criticizes Duke Zhuang"). This rather sophisticated interpretation, which implies to some extent the use of fictional personae and irony, is linked to the text proper only through the identification of Master Zhong

with the advisor Zhai Zhong. Moreover, though later subcommentators tried to show how each image in the poem had some corresponding connection to an element in the *Zuo Commentary* narrative, it seems highly likely that the Mao commentator saw the poem as an indirect satire upon the events, in which the author framed his argument in an "allegorical" manner.[23] He was aware perhaps that the "original story" of the poem pointed to another situation. He did not replace the original story with its newly contextualized significance, but merely pointed from the former to the latter.

It has been suggested that the Mao commentaries, because they were "official," completely obfuscated the "original meaning" of the poem for the scholars who were educated in the tradition (or, to be more reasonable, at least they prevented a more "natural" reading). As we can see from my example, this may be true only to a certain extent. The fact remains that when later Chinese poets allude to images or lines in the *Shi jing* in their own poems, they often demonstrate that they recognize a nonpolitical meaning for the song—particularly in the case of erotic images, or images associated with private life. This suggests that the Mao interpretations (unlike the neo-Confucian interpretations of a millennium later) did not demand a strict allegiance. I suspect the truth of the matter is this: Since the Mao school grew to prominence at a time when the free citation of *Shi jing* lines for rhetorical purposes was not completely forgotten, they were still thinking of the poems as poems whose significance was tied to whatever significant context in which they were composed or quoted. Thus, they did not create as violent a hermeneutic shift as has sometimes been assumed. For the Mao commentaries, the important issue was determining the historical event against which a particular song achieved its fullest stature as a moral statement. "Original composition" did not matter so much as the link between event and song; and since it would still have been evident to Han-era scholars that oral-tradition songs grow out of conventions, repeat previous poetic ideas, rearrange previously composed lines, and so on, the Mao commentators probably were willing to grant that a certain song might at some level be "about" a relatively "trivial" subject like courtship or marriage or lovesickness, but that its adaptation at a certain place and time elevated it to the canonical. The orthodoxy of the Mao readings did not blind elite readers to other readings; it merely told them why the Confucian tradition thought the poem was important. There are potential repressions involved here, but they involve more the degree to which the Mao enterprise overall dictated what constitutes significance in the poetic act. This is subtler than imagining that the original *Shi jing* singers have been disenfranchised merely because a gullible class of literati were willing to swallow distorted and ludicrous misinterpretations of self-evident love songs.

Toward an Elite Poetics

There are some very definite implications in the Mao reading, however, that link it to similar classical moments in other cultures. If it is too simplistic to assert that the Mao interpretations attempted to repress folk authorship altogether, and to reserve that anthology solely as an elite production, one must still note that the Mao school draws attention to "the people's" participation in song production only if critique or praise of elite policy is involved. It can also not escape our attention that Mao interpretation demanded from the audience a knowledge of elite culture and history such as could only be possessed by the educated; and by suggesting that political and historical events inspired almost all poetry, it to some extent devalued nonoccasional and nonpolitical poetry in elite eyes. In this sense, it used the poems in such a way as to reflect a chronological, morally significant history of the Zhou. Thus, it may not have been the repression of the original authors that constituted the important movement of elite appropriation: it was rather the elaborate training in the Confucian texts (implying many years of education) that would allow the reader of the *Shi jing* to read it in its "correct way" and to integrate it with the lessons learned from the other classics.

However, the Mao commentators did not wish to admit this truth, but instead glossed over the practical exclusion of folk interpretation through the construction of a poetic dialectic between ruler and ruled. In their commentary to the first poem in the *Shi jing* (a brief statement on the purpose of the songs and later known as the "Great Preface"), they introduce this dialectic through the explication of a pun: The word *feng,* or "air," the name of the first section of the *Shi jing,* could also mean "wind," "to influence," or (written with a slightly different character) "to criticize." The Great Preface begins by remarking that the first poem in the collection, "Fishhawk," said to be an epithalamium in praise of the Zhou founder's queen, exemplifies a powerful moral influence exerted by the ruler toward his subjects:[24]

> "Fishhawk" is the virtue of the Queen Consort and the beginning of the "Airs." It is the means by which the world is influenced (*feng*) and by which the relations between husband and wife are made correct. Thus it is used in smaller communities, and it is used in larger domains. "Airs" (*feng*) are "Influence" (*feng*); it is to teach. By influence it stirs them; by teaching it transforms them.

The exact applicability of this assertion to concrete situations is left vague. As I have noted, most of the poems of the *Shi jing* are interpreted by the Mao commentators as being praises or condemnations of those in power. Here, however, the emphasis is placed upon the effect the poems have, not on the ruler,

but on the people at large. Once compiled and introduced as an instrument of moral education, the *Shi jing* becomes a tool of statecraft.

A later passage, however, suggests that the songs operate on a two-way street:

> By *feng,* those above transform those below; also by *feng,* those below criticize those above. When an admonition is given that is governed by patterning [most likely, the author means "crafted speech" or "poetry" here], the one who speaks it has no culpability, yet it remains adequate to warn those who hear it. In this we have *feng.*

As many have noted, the preface suggests the interesting notion that "critical" poetry receives (or should receive) a special privilege to criticize the ruler, without offending the target or bringing punishment upon the speaker. But who are these speakers from below? Do the commentators really imagine that they are "folk authors," in the sense of nonliterate members of the nonelite? The question seems almost impossible to answer. On the one hand, the Great Preface claims that poetry is a universal human propensity, creating an influential theory in which composition becomes almost a physiological result of strong emotion:

> The poem is where the serious concerns of the mind go. Within the mind, one has "serious concerns"; coming out in language, one has a "poem." The emotions are stirred within and take on form in words. If words alone are inadequate, we speak it out in sighs. If sighing is inadequate, we sing it. If singing is inadequate, unconsciously our hands dance it and our feet tap it.

Furthermore, in the individual prefaces to each of the poems, the Mao commentators often describe singers of a song as simply *guo ren* ("people of the domain"), *ren* in this case being an ambiguous term that could apply to members of the elite or to the people in general. However, the Great Preface also puts emphasis on certain semilegendary "historians of the domains" (*guo shi*) who had an obligation to note down public events; it would be quite possible that the Mao school considered them the critics in most situations:

> When the Way of the Kings declined, rites and moral principles were abandoned; the power of government to teach failed; the government of the domains changed; the customs of the family were altered. . . . The historians of the domains understood clearly the marks of success and failure; they were pained by the abandonment of proper human relations and lamented the severity of punishments and governance. They sang their feelings to criticize (*feng*) those above, understanding the changes that had taken place and thinking about former customs.

Here, it is clear that "criticism from below" is in the hands of educated officials of the state. While the Mao tradition does not completely rule out the possibility of folk participation, it also tends to encourage identification between the students who will be reading the commentary and the critics who voiced the songs: since students of the Confucian classics themselves hoped to participate in administration and public policy (an art they would best learn by mastering the texts), it would be only natural to see the public-spirited singers as (for the most part) men with a similar outlook. Their possible membership in "the people" is complicated by their participation in a political system run by elites. This act of identification bore momentous consequences in the history of Chinese literature and culture. On the one hand, it allowed for hermeneutics to become a practical poetics: in composing poetry, the literatus poet would emulate the models of the supposed *Shi jing* singers; his poetry would at least aspire to being public minded, morally serious in its tone, and morally efficacious in its consequences. It would be rooted to historical occasion, speaking for and about its time. On the other hand, it allowed the elite literatus to imagine poetry as a fit vehicle for criticism of authority; and in this the poet would speak for himself *and* for those below him. In his role as literate mediator of the people's concerns (the one who had the cultural competence to place lament in the form of "patterned language"), he could conflate his interests with the people's. He could speak for them while ignoring the fact that he was speaking instead of them.

Songs of the Music Bureau

Folk poetry continued to be composed, of course, as it will in any culture. The question we should ask of a preprinting society then becomes: If folk poetry in some form survives, why is it preserved at all? We have seen that in the case of the *Shi jing,* the original "folk songs" (if they *were* folk songs) served a role in pre-Han times as a part of rhetorical training, and in post-Han times as a literatus guide to Zhou history and to Confucian ethics (validated by the belief that Confucius himself was the editor of the collection). We have also seen that the Mao commentators potentially conflated the folk voice with the voice of "those below" criticizing "those above," thus in a sense sanctioning the preservation of folk poetry in the future. However, such preservation is always made problematic by the literatus's role as cultural critic in the moral and aesthetic realm. Through the act of editorial preservation of such folk poetry he becomes the second author: figuratively, by making his act of preservation a potentially significant comment itself on society or public policy,

and literally, by altering the text to suit his tastes. Eventually, this tampering includes adjusting the poem not merely to reflect an ostensible moral lesson, but also to make it a more acceptable aesthetic artifact to the increasingly refined tastes of the literati. In such cases, nonpolitical folk poems are preserved also, since they can often provide emotionally powerful artistic material on which the literatus can base his own literary imitations.

This phenomenon first reveals itself at the end of the Han. Folk poetry by this time became known as *yuefu,* which literally means "Bureau of Music." This designation came about (probably by the fifth century A.D.) because it was believed that the Han dynasty Bureau of Music (in existence roughly from 120 to 20 B.C.), an office in charge of providing music for ritual and ceremony at court, also had the task of collecting folk songs to provide a sort of opinion poll on the successes and failures of the government. Needless to say, the role of the people as authors of criticism (as well as the bureaucrat/literatus's role as collector and editor) reemerges here with a vengeance. Some of these ballads survive, though their authenticity and "purity" are in doubt; the ones most likely to be close to folk originals are eighteen preserved in a historical work compiled over two hundred years after the fall of the Han (Shen Yue's *History of the Liu-Song Dynasty,* c. 450 A.D.). Because they incorporate within themselves many of the irregular aspects of verse that folk song collectors sometimes associate with authenticity (irregular meter, meaningless refrain lines, radical shifts in perspective and continuity), we are probably on solid ground when we assume that they did not undergo excessive literati tampering. Shen Yue seems to have recorded them not as examples of folk poetry, but as typical lyrics that were sung to standard tunes of the time. He transcribes them in a chapter on historical music practice.

Meanwhile, literati gradually adapted their concept of poetry from its role as a Confucian moral tool of self-expression, criticism, and education to a form of cultural capital in its own right. The prescriptions of the Great Preface continued to dominate the central poetics of the tradition, but poetry moved increasingly to a form of self-expression not always tied to political or moral issues. In this realm as well, folk poetry proved a form of inspiration; though again, whenever the literati borrowed from this tradition, they would modify, rewrite, and replace. One stunning example of this is one of the eighteen in Shen Yue's work that also survives in different form in an anthology of largely literati-authored love poetry compiled in the sixth century. Whereas Shen's songs were preserved in order to illustrate early music practice, the latter anthology was meant for pleasure reading; and so we can see that when a literatus chose to preserve a folk poem, he felt no qualms whatsoever in altering it drastically. In Stephen Owen's translation, he indicates the difference in the

two versions by italicizing lines found in the Shen Yue version but not in its literati reworking:

Song of White Hair

As bright as the snow on mountaintop,
as clear as the moon between clouds,
I have heard that you love another,
I have made up my mind to break it off.

We have both lived our lives in this city,
but when have we met with a flask of wine?
We meet today with a flask of wine,
then tomorrow at dawn, by the royal moat,
we'll linger there by the royal moat,
where the waters flow off east and west.

There's a woodcutter east of the city,
there's a woodcutter west of the city too;
both woodcutters heave together—
with no friends for whom can I show off?

Sad and dreary, sad and dreary,
when a woman marries, she should not cry,
I wanted a man with a faithful heart,
till white hair came, never to part.

The bamboo pole bends with the strike,
The fish's tail flips violently.
In a man value true feeling;
money is no use at all.

A horse is chomping at the hay,
And on the river great gentry play.
Live this day with delight on delight,
Long life to you, ten thousand years.[25]

However, this evidence of literatus tampering may not be as important as the fact that literati rapidly take up the imitation of *yuefu* themselves, adopting the personae of members of the lower classes for either moral or aesthetic purposes. In the former case, of course, they claim that they are speaking for those who cannot speak for themselves. The general assumption is that the people provide the example of political protest to socially minded literati. But since the literatus is more highly educated, more aware of circumstances, he

can model his work on the folk example in order to provide more cogent criticism. Typically, the anthologies of *yuefu* poetry preserved in premodern times generally reproduce a mere handful of anonymous folk poems (if they represent any at all) and hundreds of literati "imitations." While the anonymous originals may earn special respect as the originators of the tradition, attention is ultimately focused much more on the "sophisticated" verses they inspired. Of course, the May Fourth era has tended to put a preponderance of critical attention on these early anonymous *yuefu,* rather than on the huge number of literatus imitations. But with the exception of the tiny Shen Yue corpus of eighteen poems, we cannot be even partially sure that any of these anonymous poems has escaped literatus rewriting. Thus, it is one thing to claim the Chinese literary genres have their roots in folk traditions, but quite another to prove it textually or to argue that literati showed any great reverence for their models and inspiration.

Further examples of literatus attitudes toward folk songs might be cited. First, we may note imitations of one of the eighteen poems preserved by Shen Yue, "Mulberries by the Path." This is a narrative of the *pastourelle* variety, in which an attractive and seemingly vulnerable girl resists the advantages of a man of power:

> Sunrise in the southeast
> shines on the halls of our house of Qin,
> and the house of Qin has a lovely girl
> whose name, they say, is Luo-fu.
> Luo-fu is skilled with silkworms;
> she picks mulberry leaves south of the wall.
> The straps of her basket are of blue silk,
> its handle, a branch of cinnamon;
> her hair has a trailing ponytail,
> in her ears are bright moon pearls.
> Her skirt below is saffron damask,
> of purple damask, her vest above.
> When passers-by see Luo-fu, they
> drop their loads and stroke their beards;
> when young men see Luo-fu,
> their hats fall off and their headbands show.
> Men at the plow forget the share;
> men with the hoe forget the hoe,
> when they go home there's always a fight,
> all because of seeing Luo-fu.

From the south the lord governor came,
and he halted his five-horse team;
the lord governor's sent a runner
to find out who that maiden is:
"The house of Qin has a lovely girl
whose name, we shall say, is Luo-fu."
"And just how old is this Luo-fu?"
"Not yet up to twenty,
and just beyond fifteen."
The governor invites Luo-fu:
"Now will you ride with me?"
Luo-fu came forward and said these words:
"The lord governor's a foolish man:
the lord governor has his own wife;
I, Luo-fu, have my man.
In the east are a thousand riders and more,
and my husband is head of them all.
How can you tell who my husband is?—
he rides a white horse, a black colt behind,
the horse's tail is wound in blue silk,
and gold is the halter on its head,
at his waist is a wound-pommel sword,
worth perhaps a million or more.
At fifteen he was a county runner,
by twenty, a great lord at court,
by thirty, in the Emperor's entourage,
by forty, the master of a city.
His skin is smooth, his skin is white,
his beard is wispy and long,
he walks with slow pace through the courts,
with stately steps he goes through the hall.
There are thousands that dine at his board,
and all of them say how grand he is!"[26]

Even though Luo-fu makes it clear that her husband is of high station, the narrator tells the story from the point of view of the "lower orders"—not just in the descriptions of agricultural labor, but through Luo-fu's own final evocation of material glory, which resembles other folk poems' descriptions of the rich. The clash between Luo-fu's participation in sericulture and her seemingly high status has led some to believe that she is making up the story regarding her husband in order to keep the lord governor at bay. Nevertheless, we have an independent, forthright portrayal of a woman here, willing to

tease and reject her seducer with a vision of a man richer and more sexually attractive than he.

In a highly perceptive survey of literati imitations of this poem,[27] Joseph Roe Allen has noted two developments. Sometimes Luo-fu resists the lord governor by pleasing conventional Confucian moral principles, as in the conclusion to an imitation by Fu Xuan (217-78):

> The lady kneels in respect to answer,
> "Governor, how peculiar are your words.
> The Governor already has his own wife,
> And I, your servant, have a lowly husband.
> Heaven and earth give each his proper place.
> I trust you will, sir, change your plans."

At other times (particularly in the erotic verse popular in the fifth and sixth centuries), Luo-fu becomes a simple, lyrical image of the desired object, projected into vulnerability and passivity:

> I, your servant, have thoughts I cannot bear,
> Picking mulberry leaves south of the Wei River wall.
> My sash is loose around a robe of embroidered branches
> My hair disheveled in phoenix hair-clasps.
> Flowers dance near the overgrown thicket,
> Moths fly enchanted with the green pool.
> I have no way to answer the gentleman's message;
> Facing the spring silkworms, my tears fall.

For every one Luo-fu in a folk poem, there are a hundred Luo-fu's of literati provenance, all undermining their model's seeming power of independent speech and action.

My second example comes from the famous Tang poet Bai Juyi (772-846), a somewhat well known figure in the West through the translations and biography of Arthur Waley. It is said that he was so concerned with creating a transparent and easily understandable poetic diction that he read his poems to his washerwoman and only preserved them if she could understand them. Author of fifty "New Music Bureau Songs," he expressed the moral reasons for their composition in his preface to them:

> Each poem is unified by its thought, not by its style. The first line proclaims its topic, while the final stanza makes clear its purpose (just as with the intentions of the *Shi jing*). The poems' diction is simple and straightforward, so that those who wish to read them will find it easy to understand. Their words are forthright and sharp, so that those who wish to hear them will be profoundly warned. The af-

> fairs they describe are comprehensive and real, so that they will be believed by those who select them. Their form is adaptable and appropriate, so that one may put them to music and song. To sum up, they were written for the rulers, for the ministers, for the people, and for the affairs [they describe]. They were not written for the sake of ornament.[28]

Here, the literatus continues to play the role of mediator and satirist, not merely for the people, but for the ruler as well. He has become the sole producer of the poetry of protest, monopolizing both the wind that transforms those below and the critic who changes the policies of those above; he moves easily in his poems between the persona of the righteous literatus and that of the protesting peasant. Simplicity here is not just the mark of an influential "folk" style that eschews literary sophistication, but a mark of a conscious choice on the part of an educated poet. "They were not written for the sake of ornament." Thus speaks a man whom we know was profoundly self-conscious about matters of style, who in other poems concealed craft behind a projection of indifference, and who edited his own poetry collections because of his concern with his posthumous reputation. It is said that he hoped most of all that he would be remembered for these New Music Bureau poems, and was disappointed when his more "frivolous" verse circulated more widely. For Bai, the original model of folk protest through poetry allows him in turn to assert his own significance as poet and as literatus.

It could thus be said that the aesthetics and ethics of the Chinese literatus class was posited on the explicit belief in literature as a form of universal social expression and protest, combined with the practical assumption that such literature would only be produced by the literati themselves. It is this mechanism that must be remembered whenever one confronts arguments concerning the influence of folk genres on the development of literature. Until cheap commercial printing in the thirteenth century grants the modern reader greater access to non-elite-produced literature (and here I mean literature of the merchant and peasant classes, as well as literature by educated women), attempting to gain a textual access to non-elite worlds is extremely difficult, if not impossible. The elite male is the textual transcriber, the critic, and the textual preserver; and I believe that this case may be more serious in early China because the Chinese elite took literature so seriously from a political and moral point of view. Perhaps if they had been indifferent to the cultural production of the "other," it would have been preserved to some extent by benign neglect.[29] Instead, we have a folk textual tradition that has been carefully revised and constructed to represent the elite's conception of what the non-elites ought to be—and non-elites, in their view, only produce interesting texts when they

have some bearing on what elites do. I do not believe we can fully escape this unfortunate truth, though some accounts of Chinese literary history are willing to ignore the power relations involved in textual preservation and to assume that elite-preserved *yuefu* and other works are true, unmediated voices of the people.

I will conclude here with one final point. In describing the construction of a model of literatus/folk interaction in early Chinese literature, I have described the cultural locus classicus for an idea that resurfaces constantly in later literature. When later literati borrow or think they are borrowing from later folk traditions, they are influenced consciously or semiconsciously by the issues raised by the Mao commentaries, by the Great Preface, and by *yuefu* imitation. This is not to say that the mechanism remains unchanged over two thousand years; nothing could be farther from the truth than an image of a perpetually stagnating national elite and peasantry. Rather, the elites of different ages have tended to interpret themselves as inheritors of unbroken elite cultural development and have used this earlier model to construct interpretative frameworks for their own projects. To see this clearly means not to construct an unchanging China, but to begin to uncover the ways in which various elites have repressed the idea of change, to assert their ties to the past and to the elites of the past. The full consequences of this move ought to be investigated. Among other aspects, I can imagine a fruitful investigation of the resonances between literati/folk interaction in China and the Romantic era interest in Europe in folk-collecting as a guide to national identity. Perhaps certain contrasts with the Chinese case will illumine the way European and Chinese cultures have conceived of class relations differently and the way their elites have constructed ideologies.

Notes

1. Throughout my essay I have used the modern pinyin romanization system employed by the People's Republic, in contrast to the still often used Wade-Giles system first developed for English speakers at the end of the nineteenth century. In quoting sources that used Wade-Giles I have occasionally altered the romanization for consistency's sake.

In my notes I cite mostly English-language scholarship so that non-specialist readers can explore further. This is not meant to denigrate the vast amount of material on these subjects by Chinese scholars, both traditional and modern. In particular, the past several years have seen an increasing degree of adventurousness and speculation on the part of Chinese language scholarship that will no doubt soon significantly alter our vision of traditional Chinese literature and culture.

2. For a brief discussion of these events and their significance, see Derk Bodde, "The State and Empire of Ch'in," in *The Cambridge History of China, Volume I: The Ch'in and Han Empires, 221 B.C.-A.D. 220,* Denis Twitchett and Michael Loewe, ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 52-71.

3. This is in contrast with some scholarly conventions that term the century or two before the Han the "classical" period. But this is mostly an issue of semantics.

4. As my later discussion will suggest, trying to determine "when" a *Shi jing* poem was composed largely depends on how one conceives of the act of composition. However, internal analysis of the language does suggest this time frame as a general guideline.

5. The best English-language discussion of the interpretative schools is still James Robert Hightower, "The *Han-shih wai-chuan* and the *San chia shih*," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 11 (1948), 241-310. For general accounts of *Shi jing* interpretation and its ramifications, see Steven Van Zoeren, *Poetry and Personality: Reading, Exegesis, and Hermeneutics in Traditional China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991) and (on a more philosophical slant) Haun Saussy, *The Problem of a Chinese Aesthetic* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993). Some of my points on the "open-endedness" of *Shi jing* texts in the following discussion are addressed by him as well. Joseph R. Allen has also given an innovative yet judicious account of the history of the text in his recent Postface to the revised edition of Arthur Waley's *Shi jing* translation, *The Book of Songs* (New York: Grove Press, 1996).

6. Throughout this essay I use the terms "literati" and "literatus" to designate the educated male elite that were educated in the Confucian classics and other literary texts, and who claimed the right to serve in public office by dint of their education. I am aware that this class was constituted very differently in different time periods (and that in fact one of the major faults of Chinese historiography is to project the qualities of the late imperial literatus onto earlier periods). However, I find it a convenient term here to use instead of "elite," since it emphasizes the knowledge of literature and of texts as a key self-defining quality.

7. For an English discussion of Jin Shengtang's literary theory, see John C. Y. Wang, *Chin Sheng-t'an* (Boston: Twayne, 1972). The ambivalent relationship that Jin bore to the "folk" tradition may be seen in his most striking editorial action: Fond as he was of the popular novel *Shuihu zhuan* (which idolized the violent exploits of a band of robbers), he removed from his own edition the original ending of the novel (in which the robbers are pardoned by the emperor) and rewrote a new ending that prophetically points to their eventual capture and execution.

8. So called because their sense of identity and common cause grew out of the protests (commenced May 4, 1919) against the anti-Chinese, pro-Japanese provisions written into the Treaty of Versailles.

9. This vision of China's linguistic past contains many disturbing elements—not least because the difference between the classical written language (now called *wenyan*) and vernacular is not distinct and clear-cut, though there are, generally speaking, some important syntactic and grammatical differences between the two. Some forms of clas-

sical were easy for the barely literate to handle (ghost stories in simple classical were, for example, extremely popular). Spoken language, on the other hand, had no tradition of being written as such, so that the problems of representing it on the page were great. Written "spoken Chinese" also created problems because it exacerbated the differences between the major dialects and thus made universal comprehension more difficult. Recently, a Cantonese colleague of mine has pointed out that the twentieth-century championing of *baihua* as a "simple" language that everyone can understand and use has resulted in serious educational disadvantages for many inhabitants of South China. For her, *baihua* is another form of *wenyan,* whose use allows for the creation of educational inequalities.

One may also point out the erroneous conception of the role of the vernaculars in the Renaissance—an age when classical studies themselves experienced a tremendous revival and when poets prided themselves on their ability to compose in good Latin.

10. Chung-wen Shih, *Injustice to Tou O (Tou O Yuan): A Study and Translation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 24; romanization altered to pinyin. It is interesting to note that several pages earlier, Shih affirms that the first playwrights were educated literati who were frustrated over the Mongols' elimination of the civil-service examination system and who turned to playwriting as a way to relieve their need for expressing themselves in a public forum (1-2). One may expect that many playwrights were out-of-work, classically educated literati; frustrated humanists who were trained for bureaucratic position and then never attained it made an increasingly large class of disaffected marginal men during the late imperial period. However, Shih's typical assumption that such playwrights were "public-minded" and that playwrights could not have sprung from the popular entertainment sectors of the population has been largely refuted by more recent scholars. See, e.g., J. I. Crump, *Chinese Theatre in the Days of Kublai Khan* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980).

11. For reevaluations of "folk" and "popular" influence, see (1) for *Shi jing,* Haun Saussy; (2) for Tang songs, Paul F. Rouzer, *Writing Another's Dream: The Poetry of Wen Tingyun* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); (3) on the Ming short story: Patrick Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980); and (4) for the novel, Andrew Plaks, *Four Masterworks of the Chinese Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

12. A history of early Chinese literacy has yet to be written. In my speculations here, I am guided by recent work in Western classical studies that suggests that written literacy was still rather limited in ancient Greece and Rome: e.g., William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989); and Rosalind Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). I am somewhat more skeptical than many of my colleagues, who I believe impute an excessive degree of "writerliness" to pre-Han culture without sufficient proof. For one thing, they fail to take into sufficient consideration not merely the difficulties of the early Chinese writing system but also the sheer awkwardness of writing before and after the Qin, when many texts were copied onto long bamboo slats, tied at the ends, and rolled into bundles like window blinds. Evidence of the time attests to the burdensome weight of such books. Silk became increasingly available for books

during the Han, but remained (like papyrus) an expensive commodity.

13. Translation from D. C. Lau, *Confucius: The Analects* (London: Penguin Books, 1979), 145.

14. Arthur Waley, trans., *The Book of Songs: The Ancient Chinese Classic of Poetry* (1937; rpt. New York: Grove, 1960), 31.

15. Qian Zhongshu, *Guanzhui bian* (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1979), 1: 99-100.

16. My discussion of "Quince" here is based on a much expanded one in the introduction to my study, *Articulated Ladies: Gender and the Male Community in Early Chinese Texts* (forthcoming).

17. See his *The Bell and the Drum: Shih Ching as Formulaic Poetry in an Oral Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974).

18. *Mao shi zhengyi* (Shanghai: Guji, 1990), 140.

19. *Mao shi zhengyi,* 140.

20. Translation from Waley, *The Book of Songs,* 35; romanization altered from Wade-Giles to pinyin. I have also changed Waley's reading of the name "Zhongzi" to "Master Zhong" (the meaning of the name) in keeping with the discussion to follow.

21. Of course, this reading still has problems. Under what situation would a woman actually *sing* this poem? In the middle of the night, while the lover was crashing through the trees? Some other, more ritualized, context seems to be demanded from the point of view of common sense.

22. Translation from Burton Watson, *The Tso Chuan: Selections from China's Oldest Narrative* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 1-3.

23. How to define "allegory" in the Chinese context is a vexed issue. I mean it to extend here no further than my analysis of this particular poem and similar Mao readings. For a highly nuanced discussion of the issue, see Saussy, *The Problem of the Chinese Aesthetic.*

24. Translation from Stephen Owen, *An Anthology of Chinese Literature, Beginnings to 1911* (New York: Norton, 1996), 64-6; slightly adapted.

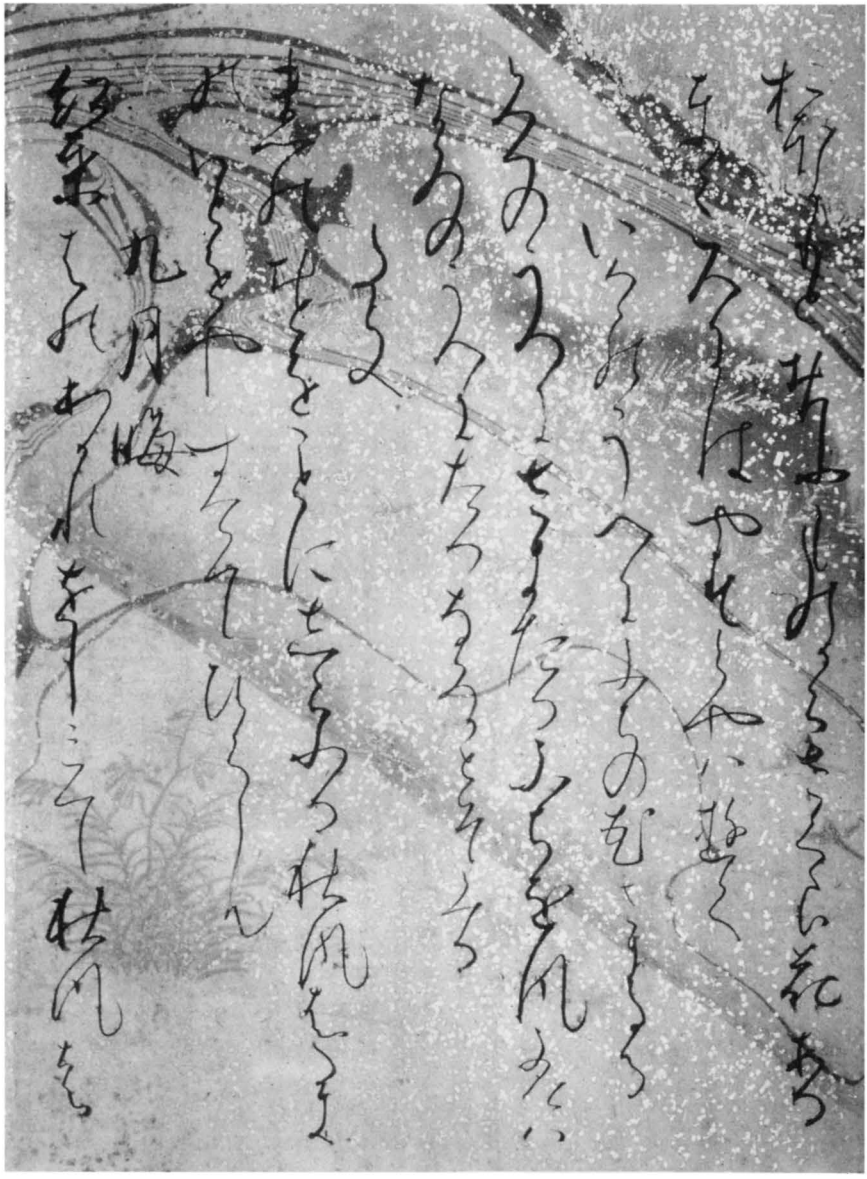
25. Owen, *An Anthology of Chinese Literature,* 233-4.

26. Owen, *An Anthology of Chinese Literature,* 234-5.

27. Joseph Roe Allen III, "From Saint to Singing Girl: The Rewriting of the Lo-fu Narrative in Chinese Literati Poetry," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 48 (December 1988), 321-61. This excellent article (which deserves much greater attention) is a good introduction to issues of "folk-literati" interaction for the interested nonspecialist. The two poems are his translations, 330 and 337.

28. Zhu Jincheng, ed., *Bai Juyi ji jian jiao* (Shanghai: Guji, 1988), 1:136.

29. There *is* one significant example of benign neglect: the Tang-era manuscripts found abandoned in the caves of Dunhuang at the beginning of the twentieth century. Not surprisingly, these fragments (which include Buddhist popular literature, popular folk narratives, popular verse, and business documents) are our one real key to reconstructing Chinese non-elite culture during the first millennium A.D. However, Dunhuang texts are so much an exception that they often create radically conflicting interpretations from different scholars who have no other basis for comparison. Time will show whether Dunhuang textual interpretation will allow us to overcome the barriers I have discussed here.



Selections from the Ki' no Tsurayuki collection in the Nishihongaji edition of *The Collection of Thirty-six Poets.*

CHAPTER FIVE

Unstating the Classical Moment:

The Logic of Forms and Forces in Heian Japan

Thomas Lamarre

The hand behind the screen,
so soft and small it appears
to have no bones, controls
an empire with a flourish
of ink on silk . . .

Gail Holst-Warhaft,
"The Hand Behind the Screen"

Between the National and the Classical

One of the paradoxes of the modern nation, writes Benedict Anderson, concerns "the objective modernity of nations to the historian's eye versus their subjective antiquity in the eyes of nationalists." In a word, those who have a sense of the nation—nationality or "nationness"—find its sources not in the historical processes of the last two hundred or so years but in the far distant past. "If nation-states are widely conceded to be 'new' and 'historical,'" Benedict explains, "the nations to which they give political expression always loom out of an immemorial past, and, still more important, glide into a limitless future."[1]

Part of the historian's job, then, is to break the sense of nationness that locates the modern nation in antiquity. Benedict turns to the "great sacral cultures" and "great classical communities"—Christendom, Ummah Islam, the Middle Kingdom, Buddhism, and so forth—in order to show that these cultural systems operated in ways entirely different from the modern nation. He sketches a number of general differences implicit in the "classical" imagination of community, at least four of which are relevant to an account of the imperial courts of ancient Japan and their relations to dynastic China:

> • All the great classical communities conceived of themselves as cosmically central, through the medium of a sacred language linked to a superterrestrial order of power.[2]
> • And, as truth-languages, imbued with an impulse largely foreign to nationalism, the impulse [was] toward conversion. By conversion, I mean not so much the acceptance of particular religious tenets, but alchemical absorption. . . . The whole nature of man's being is sacrally malleable.[3]
> • In the modern conception, state sovereignty is fully, flatly, and evenly operative over each square centimetre of a legally demarcated territory. But in the older imagining, where states were defined by centres, borders were porous and indistinct, and sovereignties faded imperceptibly into one another.[4]
> • One must also remember that these antique monarchical states expanded not only by warfare but by sexual politics. . . . In realms where polygyny was religiously sanctioned, complex systems of tiered concubinage were essential to the integration of the realm. In fact, royal lineages often derived their prestige, aside from any aura of divinity, from, shall we say, miscegenation?[5]

These four remarks erode the cornerstones of the national imagination, in particular of the Wilsonian model that continues to underwrite national and nationalist movements: linguistic homogeneity (in a spoken vernacular); ethnic, racial, or cultural purity; and territoriality.[6] None of these national unities, Benedict tells us, are major modes in classical communities. Classical communities will be indifferent to linguistic differences, ethnically diffuse, and territorially porous.

Now, Benedict's account of the differences between classical and national systems raises questions about something like "the classical moment." To what extent might one objectively place a specific historical moment under the rubric "classical"? Benedict's descriptions suggest that the classical community is fundamentally diffuse, heterogeneous, and porous—especially in comparison to the national community; it might be called a classical nexus rather than a classical moment. One might think of the classical moment as a retroactive projection of the national imagination. That is, the national imagination pares away the heterogeneity of the classical nexus, and isolates and extracts a classical language and culture that bear an uncanny resemblance to the modern nation.

The classical moment of Japan usually centers on two of the early imperial courts, Heijô (710-94) and Heian (794-1185).[7] Sometimes, the earliest texts of Japan—the stories, myths, and songs compiled in *Kojiki* (c. 702) and *Man'yôshû* (c. 759)—take the honors in elucidating the language, culture, and boundaries of the ancient Japanese community. Sometimes, the texts of the Heian court—particularly the songs of the *Kokinwakashû* (c. 905) or the tales

in the *Genji monogatari* (c. 1001-1013)—come to the fore. In either case, however, the boundaries of classical Japanese language, culture, and people are normally set in distinction to dynastic China. Frequently, the two moments are woven into stages of a history in which Japanese people successfully confront the imperialist threat of Chinese dynasties by adhering to their own language and customs. In short, the classical moment of Japan is withdrawn from the classical nexus (related to dynastic China). Scholars see it as a national, not a classical, community.

The imposition of the national imagination on the classical nexus thus raises serious questions about historical and textual objectivity vis-à-vis classical Japanese or ancient Japan. There is a certain crisis with respect to objective knowledge of events that are already nationalized. This crisis becomes all the more apparent if one retraces the standardization of classical texts in relation to the emergence of the modern nation.

In the case of classical Japanese, in the wake of Naoki Sakai's work, it is now easy to see that nativist scholars of the early modern period largely invented this language, forging a new dialect of Japanese from a variety of sources.[8] Then, with the advent of modern modes of production—what Anderson calls print capitalism—all obstacles to the comprehension of classical texts in a vernacular-style dialect are gradually removed, resulting in a nearly seamless classical language, one that is as much artifact as fact. Our modern editions of classical texts are contemporary with the novel and the newspaper. Naturally, ancient scholars in China, Japan, and Korea also compiled collections and annotations. Those texts, however, are entirely different from the modern editions—not simply in their principles of organization, production, and dissemination, but also in the ways in which one was to relate to the text, how one entered into it, and how writing interpellated, embodied, and "subjectified" that reader.

Nevertheless, when one gives up on the notion of continuity or similarity between the classical and the national, and when one signals that the classical is, in some sense, always invented through the modern nation, this is not to claim that the classical is nothing but an abitrary fabrication of the national. Rather than choose between causal links and arbitrariness, one might say that the national and the classical become mutually contingent. Even if the classical is the lesser partner in this mutual investment, it nonetheless remains a site of alterity, one that can disrupt or shift the national imagination. It is possible to turn to classical artifacts and confront the national imagination with its forgotten contingencies and suppressed obstacles—although without predictable results or guarantees. One strategy is to evoke a classical community and a classical nexus rather than a classical-cum-national moment.

The following account of the poetics of Heian Japan attempts to rub the classical nexus against the national imagination in two ways: first and foremost, through an analysis of poetic inscription, around the calligraphic expression stripped from modern editions; and through an account of the logic of goverance rooted in Heian inscription. Such an entrance into the classical Japanese text brings to the fore many of the aspects of classical communities outlined by Anderson, namely (1) an emphasis on cosmological language, written script, and nonarbitrary signs (with an indifference to vernacular language); (2) ethnic hybridity; (3) diffuse and porous territoriality; and (4) a malleable and heterogeneous subjectivity.

Brushwork

In the Heian text, the brush moves down the page, forming a sinuous series of characters. Each character emerges around a center of motion that differentiates its elements from others in the series. As the brush passes from character to character, it traces a series of forms that are at once mobile, sensible, and intelligible. It moves in a trail of dark ink, crossing over a fantastical landscape: paper dyed with lavenders, browns, yellows, and reds that seep and swirl; paper flecked with bits of gold and silver; paper rubbed with patterns and figures; paper painted with grasses, birds, bugs, or trees; papers pieced together in patchwork of designs and colors.[9] And then, as the brush inks its forms across such "paperscapes," it traverses and differentiates certain styles, passing from the pliant, open strokes of the "grass style" into the bold and deliberate strokes of the "stiff style," or into the curved strokes of the "current style."[10] In sum, the visible register of the Heian text presents a variety of intelligible forms (characters) that emerge upon a field of sensible forms (colors, patterns, designs, images, figures).

This brief, composite description of the calligraphy of the Heian text indicates two important aspects of its historical context. First, it calls attention to the continental lineage of Heian Japan (794-1185), where techniques of inscription derived from the Chinese character and related to the expansion and fragmentation of a series of Chinese courts, kingdoms, and dynasties that arose between the Han dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.) and the T'ang dynasty (618-907). As for the Chinese character, Anderson reminds us, "even the Middle Kingdom—which, though we think of it today as Chinese, imagined itself not as Chinese, but as central—[was] largely imaginable through the medium of a sacred language and written script.[11]" In sum, if these texts are not exactly Japanese in any modern sense, neither are they Chinese. The goal was

not to create an ethnic speech community.

Second, the calligraphic text calls attention to the functions and effects of writing itself: Because it enabled the emergence of intelligible forms from the realm of sensible forms, the discipline of the brush manifested and afforded access to a certain cosmological order. This is to say, in the manner of Anderson, "The ideograms of Chinese . . . were emanations of reality, not randomly fabricated representations of it."[12]

Naturally, if one insists on it, the Heian text, like the Heian court, presents all manner of particularities that differentiate it from, say, the styles of the T'ang capital at Ch'ang-an. Indeed, the Heian text acts out those differences in calligraphic styles: certain variations on the grass style were commonly associated with "Japanese" (Yamato) styles, and certain variations on the stiff style with "Chinese" (Han or T'ang) styles. But, if these designations are not Chinese or Japanese in the modern sense, what are the aims or effects of this differentiation of "Japanese" and "Chinese"? What kind of hierarchies did such stylistic variations entail?

Now, characters present intelligible sounds as well as visible forms. Heian poets, however, did not relate these sounds to any vernacular dialect or limit them to an ethnic language. They wrote of sounds that emerge from the cries of birds and the chirps of bugs into a realm of intelligibility that merges with human speech. If the Heian court gave primacy to poetics, it was for cosmological reasons. In poetry, the intelligibility of sounds depends on rhythms, and rhythms move past the particularities of speech in the direction of songs that stomp, sigh, and gesture in time with cosmic cycles. To evoke Anderson again: "All the great classical communities conceived of themselves as cosmically central, through the medium of a sacred language linked to a superterrestrial order of power." In Heian poetics, it is a matter of the emergence of human song from sensible forms (chirps, cries, etc.), of the absorption of the human into the cosmological.

Nonetheless, the vocal register of the classical text complicates matters considerably, because the temptation is to read nothing but speech from it, rather than attend to the rhythm or music that aligns it with the superterrestrial order (incantation, recitation, cantillation). By and large, modern readers see the poetic text as speech, as Japanese speech. This speech effect, I would argue, is largely an effect of modern modes of production—print capitalism and the production of standard texts—as well as the national imagination.

As a result, in the context of the Heian text, we do not look closely at the differential operations of forms, of images and sounds; we replace them with linguistic differences and grammatical operations. Yamato forms are called Japanese language, and the Han/T'ang forms are called Chinese language. This

would be not a problem, except that modern scholars tend to define language so chastely, fitting Heian poetic language into the contours of Japanese speech. This impossibly chaste definition of language (as ethnic speech) erects barriers to intimacy between Yamato forms and Han/T'ang forms, on the basis of linguistic differences between Japanese and Chinese grammars. Finally, sexual/racial purity is called upon to shore up this barrier to grammatical intimacy, via the feminine hand.

The Heian text differentiates gender by way of styles of brushwork: certain variations on the grass style came to be known as the "feminine hand," and certain variations on the stiff style came to be known as the "masculine hand." In other words, the differentiation of feminine and masculine overlapped the differentiation of Yamato and T'ang. What does it mean to differentiate genders or courts on the basis of styles operated through the brush as it moves through sensible and intelligible forms?

In contemporary scholarship, the femininity of the feminine hand becomes subject to a number of suggestive generalizations. First, femininity is collapsed into the female sex (despite the fact that male poets wrote feminine poems in the feminine hand). Second, written forms are treated as transparent vehicles for speech. Third, Yamato forms are equated with Japanese ethnicity. As a consequence of these three reductions, the feminine hand ultimately becomes conflated with an unadulterated mother tongue. The feminine hand becomes a sign of the resistance of the Japanese people to Chinese forms. It stands for the unity and continuity of Japanese speech, despite the use of Chinese forms at court. Ultimately, this reduction of the complexities of Heian inscription and institutions tells a dubious story: that Japanese women remained pure and chaste, unadulterated by foreign forms.

In direct contrast with the modern imagination of linguistic continuity and sexual/racial purity, the formal register of the Heian text shows little interest in purity or chastity: Forms entwine, couple, and interpenetrate, at once differentiated and integrated. The visual or formal register of Heian texts enacts the intimacy of Japanese forms and Chinese forms. Why not follow this copulation of forms into the vocal register, and conclude that the sounds of Chinese speech and the turns of Chinese grammar resonate and twine with Japanese poetics? Once again, however, it would not be a question merely of China and Chinese, but of another kind of nexus—a network of imperial courts that would include the courts and kingdoms on the Korean peninsula—Palhae, Paekche, Silla, Koguryo—as well as those of China.[13]

In sum, it is difficult to imagine the linguistic or ethnic (sexual/racial) chastity of the Heian court vis-à-vis the other kingdoms and courts spun across

East Asia in the eighth and ninth centuries, and yet does the evocation of East Asian intimacy not bring with it certain risks? Is this intimacy to be conjured into the matrix of a pan-Asian embrace?

The copulation and interpenetration of forms within the East Asian nexus derives its consistency and integrity from a kind of cosmological framework. Recall the evocation of cosmic and erotic forces in court poetics—song moves between heaven and earth, it soothes between man and woman. There is tremendous lability manifested into the poetic coupling of forms, an incessant interchange that anticipates the intrigues based on feminine impersonation, transvestism, and sexual substitution that appear in Heian tales.[14] This lability, however, should not be imagined as a utopian play of sheer differences. These labile couples are subject to certain limitations, if not biological then cosmological. The poetic association of erotic forces with cosmic forces is evidence enough that these are not free-floating differences or empty exchanges. On the contrary, when one recalls that the romantic intrigues in tales like *Genji monogatari* [The Tale of Genji] are expressions of the sexual politics of imperial succession, then Anderson's remarks seem all the more apt. "In realms where polygyny was religiously sanctioned," he reminds us, "complex systems of tiered concubinage were essential to the integration of the realm. In fact, royal lineages often derived their prestige, aside from any aura of divinity, from, shall we say, miscegenation?"[15] If Heian poetics is so central to the integration of the Yamato realm, is it not because song arises out of, and harnesses, the cosmological forces that assure productive couplings? In modern ethnic or racial terms, this is "miscegenation" to be sure, and yet the authority of that hybridity stems from the strict cultivation of cosmic forces. In a word, it is carefully controlled hybridity, but without ethnic or linguistic pretensions.

Intimacy, too, has its strategies and histories. If the Heian logic of forms does not demand linguistic purity or ethnic chastity, it makes other demands of men and women. Even the supple movements of brush enact certain types of lines, centers, and boundaries. And, as intelligible forms emerge on the field of sensible forms, the discipline of the brush evokes an order of sensation, emotion, and action. If the logic of Heian poetics does not command purity and chastity but operates through intimacy and permeability, nevertheless it exacts forms of intelligibility that unfurl their own hierarchies and authorities, ones that are intimately linked with the realm of cosmology.

Syntheses

At the Heian court, poetics permeated all aspects of court life. The dexterity of the brush, the style of composition, the fold, texture, and pattern of paper significantly marked the courtier's position in relation to others. Diaries and tales turned around poems, couples navigated through trysts and alliances with poems; poems punctuated the rites and ceremonies that negotiated the cosmological dimension of court bureaucracies, and poems flowed with major and minor exchanges of wealth—at large-scale poetry contests, the presentation and evaluation of poems meshed with an almost potlatch-like collection and redistribution of ranks and wealth.

The *waka,* a thirty-one-syllable poem or song, came to prominence in the course of the ninth century, in the first century after the removal of the court to Heian-kyô from Heijô-kyô around 794. In 905, the emperor Daigo ordered the compilation of an imperial anthology of *waka,* and by around the year 920, four compilers (Ki no Tsurayuki, Mibu no Tadamine, Oshikôchi Mitsune, and Ki no Tomonori) had gleaned 1,111 poems from a range of sources and eras, presenting them in twenty scrolls by topic, with two prefaces, and with brief notes on each poem (the poet's name and the occasion of composition).[16] The anthology took the title *Kokinwakashû,* or "Collection of Yamato Songs Old and New," and its poetics became the major source for subsequent composition in court circles.

Even this overview of *Kokinwakashû* shows that it brought together many forms of expression.[17] (1) The characters of songs spin supplely down the page in variations on the grass style (*kana*) with intermittent titles and topics in the stiff or current styles (*mana*).[18] (2) Songs resonate across the ages: the collection strategically comprises poems from several generations.[19] (3) Twenty scrolls unwind in two major cycles: The first cycle begins with six scrolls that move from the first day of spring of the new year through the last day of winter, then on into congratulations, separations, travels, and wordplays; the other cycle winds through five scrolls of love, from a time before lovers meet till the dissolution of their alliance, and on into grief and miscellaneous forms and styles.[20] (4) Commentaries on poems speak of ceremonies, exchanges, and competitions, and in these names and notes resides the politics of poetic inclusion, collusion, and competition. In sum, the anthology brought together forms of expression related to the patterns of words, of eras, of seasons and emotions, and of court ceremonies, competitions, and hierarchies. It implied a tremendous synthesis of forms, in the multiple registers of inscription, composition, competition, and compilation.

This is one way in which a classical moment might be retroactively iso-

lated from the classical nexus: at a certain historical moment, the inauguration of stable modes of representation enabled cohesive modes of thought and practice, and letters (or characters) flourish and prosper. The classical moment is construed, above all, as point of stability, prosperity, and cohesiveness. This is how *Kokinwakashû* is often presented: it uses *kana* inscription to stabilize modes of representation, thus allowing *waka* poetry to prosper at the court, which prosperity brings cohesiveness and unity to the Heian order. In short, the classical moment would be one moment of synthesis isolated from a nexus of events, practices, and consistencies. Typically, the synthetic moment, once isolated, is brought into alignment with the unities of the modern nation. Thus studies of Heian *waka* tend to flirt with the idea that the consistency of the classical text derives from the homogeneity, purity, and unity of the Japanese language and people. And so the historical task of the classical scholar would be to differentiate the synthetic moment of the Heian text and Heian court from the synthetic moment of the Japanese language and Japanese nation. Anderson's example shows precisely that the nationalist assumptions to be avoided are linguistic homogeneity, ethnic purity, and cultural unity.

For all that the goal may thus be stated objectively, the genealogy of classical studies sets up practical barriers. In particular, there is the legacy of textual transcription and translation, in which the goal is to extract the spoken message (signification) from the Heian "language" of sensible and intelligible forms (poetic inscription and expression). Transcription and translation of classical texts create the impression that the consistency of a text like *Kokinwakashû* derives from, and even strives for, linguistic homogeneity. From linguistic homogeneity, it is not far to ethnic homogeneity and to racial or national purity. Since it inheres in the very materiality of our texts, this legacy is not so easily transformed.

This is where an analysis of the forms and forces implicated in the synthetic moment of Heian poetics tentatively affords another historical perspective. Analysis of the logic of forms in Heian poetics recalls links among poetry, calligraphy, and cosmology at the Heian court that imply very different kinds of stability, prosperity, and consistency in early Japan. It would begin with an exploration of various modes and movements of synthesis in and around the Heian court (in contradistinction to those of the modern Japanese nation).

Many modes of synthesis punctuated the often chaotic interactions among peoples, languages, techniques, ideas, and forms that traveled and settled within and around the courts at Heijô-kyô and Heian-kyô. The synthetic poetics of *Kokinwakashû* did not come out of nowhere, nor was it alone. In fact, the

Kokin prefaces name *Man'yôshû,* or "Collection of Myriad Ages," as a prior site of order in the incessant flow and jumble of things. *Man'yôshû* itself is a vast collection of poetic forms. It presents multiple experiments with scripts, events, songs, and commentaries. Apparently, a number of scribes and poets compiled different scrolls at different times from different eras. Finally, by around 759, Otomo no Yakamochi had gathered these attempts and made his own additions to them. The result looks not so much like a form of synthesis as it does like a series of different attempts at synthesis.

Contemporary with *Man'yôshû* there appeared an anthology of Chinese songs, *Kaifûsô* (751), and this was followed by three imperial anthologies of Chinese poems, namely, *Ryôunshû* (814), *Bunkashûreishû* (815), and *Keikokushû* (827). Although the synthetic moment of *Kokinwakashû* evokes *Man'yôshû* and borrows songs from it, nonetheless its formal methods and concepts derive largely from these three imperial anthologies of Han songs, as well as from Chinese poetic prefaces. Thus, even when *Kokinwakashû* summons *Man'yôshû,* it speaks in the language of Chinese poetics of a particular period.

Now, to deal historically with this array of poetic collections, modern scholars borrow and transform the rhetoric of the *Kokin* prefaces. That is, the *Kokin* prefaces place the rubric "Yamato" on *Man'yôshû,* which rubric is now read as "Japanese"—Japanese language, Japanese people, Japanese culture. Thus a synthetic, hybrid text like *Man'yôshû* often is read for unity, purity, and homogeneity. Occasionally, it is noted that *Man'yôshû* is a hybrid affair, trafficking in a range of Chinese forms and scripts, and yet, even when hybridity is acknowledged, the tendency is to look for the moment of Japaneseness, in opposition to Chineseness. Likewise with *Kokinwakashû.* The problem is basically this: *Kokin* poetics shows a constant evocation of doubleness, ceaselessly conjoining "Japanese" and "Chinese" forms, and modern histories take *Kokin* doubleness and nationalize it within a framework of exclusion/inclusion. *Kokin*-style doubleness is fit into a format of opposition, repression, negation, or absorption.

At one time, it was common to construe the Chinese poetic anthologies of the early ninth century in terms of a "dark age of native styles," in which the advent of Chinese characters cast shadows on the radiance of native song. Recently, it has become equally common to allude to an "age of adulation of Han styles," and to point out that Yamato song continued to be performed at the Heian court even in the era of the Chinese anthologies.[21] Hence the two stories most often told about Yamato and Han song: (1) Han forms threatened to occlude Yamato forms, but Yamato forms resisted and triumphed over them—*Kokinwakashû* marked the *restoration* of native forms; (2) Han forms

presented a challenge to Yamato forms, but Yamato forms successfully absorbed Han forms—*Kokinwakashû* completed the *absorption* of foreign forms. In both stories, there lingers a sense that Yamato forms existed in some pure form before the advent of Han forms—invariably in oral form. In both stories, the act of inscription is not simply ignored and overlooked; it is shunned as a source of obscurity or even degeneracy. Native purity, on the other hand, derives from the myth of a homogeneous Japanese language in the ancient past. There is, however, no evidence that ancient communities, Japanese or otherwise, strived for linguistic purity or homogeneity.

Needless to say, for many Japanese scholars as well, these stories of Chinese encroachment and Japanese resistance ring false—yet how to discuss the Heian differentiation of Yamato and Han? The challenge, then, is to find ways of talking about the constant evocation of doubleness at the Heian court, without immediate recourse to the paradigm of the modern national community (even if the nation inevitably remains the point of departure). At the outset, it is essential to look to logic of inscription rather than assume an underlying speech community.

Chinese characters, as used at the early Japanese courts, did not cloud the native world in dark shadows. For all the attendant difficulty and discipline, characters imparted a luminous, even numinous, aura to song. As for the legends of Japanese inability to grasp complexities of foreign script, it should be noted that even the scribes of *Man'yôshû* display great sophistication with inscription, reveling in the twists, turns, and complexities of characters, words, and forms. In fact, in *Man'yôshû,* the operations of Chinese characters are at the heart of diverse, intermittent efforts to draw together an enormous range of styles, languages, and techniques. It is not in the fantastical realm of prior orality and native purity that one should look for the synthetic capacity that pulls together these poetic collections, but in the operations of the Chinese character and its inscription. Indeed, it would be a gross simplification of the poetic record to pretend that Japanese forms can be objectively isolated from China or Korea at any moment in the poetics of early Japan. Many of the differences between *Man'yôshû* and the Chinese anthologies could be attributed to Taoist modes versus Confucian modes.[22] But then, none of these Chinese modes—Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism—acted in any unitary manner.

If Heian poetics incessantly differentiated Han and Yamato forms, it relied on the sympathy implicit in prior, already synthetic forms in order to induce them to couple. The goal of the *Kokin* synthesis was to assure that Han and Yamato forms couple intelligibly and productively, rather than randomly and destructively—on the basis of already constructed sympathies found

in *Man'yôshû* and the Chinese anthologies. The poetics of the *Kokin* era looked to these previous poetic collections, and regardless of the predominance of Yamato or Han styles, it treats those songs and collections as moments that already entail sympathy or intimacy, in order to operate a broader, more stable synthesis. In this respect, it entails a mode of production and delimitation that has little in common with the strategies of national languages with its notions of a vernacular speech community bounded by the national territory.

In sum, it is largely inscription that holds together the various attempts to synthesize poetic styles, languages, and techniques. Yet how does inscription—the dexterous movements of the brush—enable synthesis? It might be said, on the most basic level, that inscription brings a number of different elements into a common space. Yet the question of specificity arises. How is the brush different from, say, print? How does the "brush space" (or the brush assemblage) construct its spaces? What kinds of centers and boundaries does it impart or enable?

These questions can be followed in two directions. On the one hand, it is a matter of circuits of production, distribution, and reception. One could speak of the ways in which calligraphic styles are passed from masters to disciples, and how those lines of authority make styles into schools and lineages, imparting borders and inducing competitions between different groups. There are, moreover, all the limitations and extensions implicit in the materials for inscription—availability of, as well as speed of production, dissemination, and replication enabled by, the assemblage of brush, ink, paper, and so on.

On the other hand, one could speak of the ways in which the brush constructs its textual space—but with an eye to the subjective, expressive, and even perceptual dimensions of brushwork. In this account, I move in the direction of this second, somewhat phenomenological (rather than sociological) line of historical inquiry, but, because these two aspects of inscription are always imbricated, I point to sociohistorical aspects along the way. In particular, I would like to discuss briefly how the synthetic operations of brushwork show *a structure of identity* with the boundaries and centers of imperial courts. The argument proceeds by analogy, although these structures are not merely analogous but also coterminus and coincident.

At the outset, on the basis of the calligraphic text with its dyes, figures, flecks, and characters, I suggested that the Heian logic of brushwork involves an assemblage designed to convert sensible forms into intelligible forms. Brushwork involves an act of intelligibility that raises sensible forms (rhythms, figures, colors, patterns) into the realm of cosmology or ontology. Yet it would be truer to say that brushwork hovers between sensible and intelligible forms, making them interchangeable. This is the logic announced in *Kokinwakashû.*

"Even though eras shift and deeds pass, and delights and sorrows come and go, the written patterns (*moji*) of songs continue," writes the principal compiler Ki no Tsurayuki at the close of his preface. "Should they be retained as changeless as bird tracks and transmitted as long as rampant vines, just as the evergreen needles never scatter and vanish, just as the threads of green willow always trail, then people who know the designs of songs and obtain the heart of words will surely look up to the high ages and yearn for this day, just as we look to the moon in the great heavens."[23]

So often poetic treatises speak of the ways in which writing and singing soothe lands and humans, but this activity does not imply a logic of the frame (a bounded space in which contradictions vanish or are sublimated into unison). Calligraphic writing can produce boundaries and centers, but these are not those of typography or even of the quill strokes of Gothic inscription. Letters sit on a line, and modern typography furthers their aura of gravity. Roman letters lope across the horizontal, feet on the ground, measuring the line. This calligraphy, however, centers each glyph, locating a center of motion that makes the character seem to hover in its own field of forces. It delineates space in such a way that calls attention to various centers of motion and to the resonance that arises between centers of motion. Topologically, it aligns centers of motion in harmonic patterns (even if those harmonies might ring dissonantly in modern ears), such that new centers of motion or resonance arise between centers. Thus, when poetic treatises relate writing to ruling, it is not surprising that the ideology is one of concentric structures, of relations between centers, and of motions toward and away from centers.

The structure of resonant centers also attends the formation of the early Japanese courts. Prior to the establishment of the capital of Heian-kyô, the capital migrated frequently. There were so many travels and removals: to Naniwa (645), to Otsu (667), to Asuka (672), to Fujiwara (694), to Heijô (or Nara, 710). Under the emperor Shômu (r. 724-749), the capital moved four times in the space of five years (740-745): to Kuni, Shigaraki, Naniwa, and then Heijô. Historians debate whether a single principle governed such migrations (say, the succession of the throne, with attendant conflicts between princes). Overall, even though the specific reasons and intervals for migration varied considerably, the problem of imperial succession seems to have been at issue. This at least is clear: With each successive removal, the capital emerged on a grander scale, better approximating the model of continental courts and capitals. With the removal to Heian-kyô (794), the capital settled. Naturally, this did not mean that conflicts, movements, and imperial successions had been settled once and for all. But the arena of conflict and movement had changed, precisely because the capital itself would no longer move.

At Heijô-kyô, for instance, the imperial palace contended with the claims of various clans and the power of various Buddhist temples. Although the imperial order announced the ascendancy of the Yamato lineage, other clans did not so easily yield. A number of clans allied their fortunes with Buddhist temples (the sites of literacy and thus of bureaucracy), funding these lavishly. The Fujiwara family erected a temple that visibly overshadowed the imperial palace. One of the reasons for the removal of the palace to Heian-kyô was to withdraw from the power of the Buddhist temples; the first emperors of the Heian court then attempted to construct new relations between various assemblages: they promoted two sects of esoteric Buddhism, whose founders each built a temple in the capital but located their major complexes at a remove. The emperor Saga (r. 809-823), often construed as the pinnacle of early Heian splendor, sustained close ties with Kûkai (774-835), the monk who traveled to Ch'ang-an, returning to found and promote the ascendancy of Shingon Buddhism at the Heian court. Both Saga and Kûkai were renowned from their poetry and calligraphy, which recalls the close ties between poetry, calligraphy, and authority (in the guise of cosmology, in various permutations of Buddhist, Confucian, and Taoist modes).

In brief, the topology of the Heian capital operated a redistribution of authorities and their hierarchies, largely by attempting to organize movements and exchanges within and around the capital. By the late ninth century, around the time of *Kokinwakashû,* edicts prohibited the movements of courtiers outside the capital, and official missions to the T'ang capital at Chang-an were abolished. These redistributions, injunctions, and prohibitions should not be seen as attempts at isolation and introversion of the Heian court, however. These constituted attempts to regulate traffic, not to halt it. Likewise with Heian poetics: It was an art that aimed to direct flows and exchanges between humans, as well as between terrestrial forms and celestial patterns. In both court topology and court poetry emerge forms of synthesis designed not simply to consolidate authority but primarily to assure its productivity and motility. This entailed generative modes of synthesis, ultimately grounded in cosmic order, but geared toward a sensuous interpellation of courtiers.

The power of brushwork lay in the way in which it could yoke sensible forms (and thus courtiers' practices and experiences) to an intelligible order, an order that linked the Heian court into a larger nexus of resonant centers (other courts and empires) while it sustained the autonomy of centers. If one finds a structure of identity between Heian inscription and the formation of the Heian court, it is partly because courtiers imagined and invented their community within this matrix. The logic of *bunshokeikoku*—roughly, "designs, patterns, or inscriptions to alleviate/align the land"—so important in the for-

mation of the Heian court, indicates that the writing and ruling were not simply analogous but fundamentally coincident for the Heian imagination. But then, even if brushwork is the most obvious site to look at the intersection of ruling and writing, the logic of *bunshokeikoku* suggests that one would have to explore a vaster range of designs, patterns, and inscriptions in order to understand the ways in which Heian order entered into the larger "classical community" by way of the synthetic nexus of sensible and intelligible forms.

Visuality

A comparison of the songs of the early *Man'yôshû* with those of *Kokinwakashû* shows a mutation in the dimension of visuality. A certain manner of seeing (*miru*) vanishes, giving way to feeling/thinking (*omohu*).[24] A number of modern commentators relate this visual shift to a loss of contact with the land: with the formation of the Heian capital, partly through imperial injunctions, partly through new forms of representation, the courtiers retreated from the lands outside the capital, moving into a world of screens and scrolls.[25] Moreover, because the emergence of feeling/thinking can be related directly to specific Chinese forms of poetry, this perceptual shift has also been used to shore up the notion of a dark ages of native styles: Chinese modes of feeling/thinking occluded the Japanese style of seeing. Invariably, into interpretations of Heian poetic perception creeps the notion that before the advent of Chinese modes of representation, inscription, and mediation, the Japanese native entertained a direct and unmediated relation with the land. Orality becomes an operative part of this myth. Orality is construed as a form of transparent representation because it does not bother to attend to inscription or mediation in reading the songs of the *Man'yôshû.*

It is only possible to treat poetic vocality as oral transparency and immediacy by ignoring the dynamics of visuality. Of the early *Man'yôshû,* one would need to ask, "What kind of visual intimacy with the land?" In brief, the visuality of *Man'yô* songs could be characterized in terms of a vision that traces geomantic lines of force across the land, seeking auspicious alignments for the construction of edifices, or searching auspicious passages for travelers and progressions. It brings together vision and motion in ways that are not incompatible with specific uses of Chinese characters, related to magical operations of incantation and inscription. In effect, then, the poetic shift from *miru* (seeing) to *omohu* (feeling/thinking) indicates changes that are subtler than a loss of immediacy. They hint at a profound mutation of bodies, senses, and emotions.

Other general shifts in visibilities, however hard to quantify and evaluate, give evidence of seismic movement beneath the surface of the perceptual shift from *miru* to *omohu.* First, in the course of the ninth century, the continental practice of cloistering noblewomen became prevalent.[26] At Heijô-kyô, women frequently reigned (about half of the sovereigns were female).[27] At the early Heian court, women participated in the public composition of Chinese poetry. But, by the time of *Kokinwakashû,* one detects the woman deemed characteristic of court society: Behind a series of screens, blinds, shutters, and female attendants, hobbled with layer upon layer of robes, the noblewoman strategically concealed herself from the eyes of male courtiers, for seeing her amounted to knowing her sexually.[28] Yet it wasn't simply a matter of purity and chastity but of strategic visibility and sexual alliance: The cloistered woman and her family could control how she was seen, and her future worth showed not only in the degree of her invisibility to male eyes, but also in the quality of the poems that emerged from the darkness—the finesse of her hand as it yielded the brush, as it folded the paper; and the wealth of her handicraft showed in the dyes and patterns of her papers, in the designs and textures of her robes, in the lure of her manufactured scents. Naturally, a noblewoman did not make all these with her own hands. Her hand, like her house, comprised a number of attendant hands and thus manifested both her skills and her resources, which would be integral in supplying those goods that served as items of exchange, and that would assure the position of her man at the court. In this way, shifts in women's visibility located feminine aura and authority in the dexterity of hand, and for noblewomen, this enabled a grasp on authority, but a tenuous one. After all, men not only could write in the feminine hand but also could assume ownership of household manufacture.[29] It is important to keep in mind that even though the feminine imparted some degree of authority to noblewomen, nonetheless it did not belong to them; men also deployed the feminine hand to their own ends.

Second, the visibility of the sovereign changed. He, too, now retreated in the secluded chambers of the palace, attentive to the hierarchy of consorts and concubines that structured the transfer of imperial authority between generations; and at many ceremonies and banquets, he sat behind screens or blinds. The emperor and his palace, as expression had it, lived concealed in the clouds. This shift might be related back to previous modes of transferring the imperial prerogative. At Heijô-kyô, before the Buddhist practice of cremation in which the earthly body went up in smoke, the sovereign's body underwent a double burial. Upon his death, his body rested in a tomb chamber for a prescribed period, during which his soul passed to the one who saw to him; then,

once the imperial authority had flown, his double emerged, and his body underwent a second, final burial. But rather than a Buddhist transformation of native practices, this could be interpreted in terms of a Buddhist intervention into Taoist practices.[30] In any event, songs and chronicles from Heijô times speak of conflicts and battles at tombs during the double burial, attesting to the complexities of this mode of doubling the emperor. In any event, with the disappearance of the emperor's body, the Heian court bypassed the double burial with a different mode of doubling: Emperors abdicated and retired, becoming cloistered emperors, often leaving the throne to a young heir. Political conflict then centered on who would advise the young emperor—a former, cloistered emperor (a paternal relation) or a regent (a maternal relation)?

The northern branch of the Fujiwara family maneuvred triumphantly around the time of *Kokinwakashû,* inaugurating the regency system and stabilizing political succession in ways very much dependent on the new play of visibilities. Women and sovereigns (and women as sovereigns) retreated into the shadowy recesses or cloudy distances, emerging now in the form of two "hands"—the feminine hand of finely wrought figures, folds, and patterns that brought order to the nighttime realm of emotions and alliances, and the imperial hand of edicts, codes, and proclamations that brought order to the daytime realm of court bureaucracies. Thus, maneuvring in both realms, the regents succeeded in making their fortunes through the strategic coupling of diurnal and nocturnal activities. Yet it would be an overstatement to attribute this outcome wholly to the regents' intrigues. The regents, too, remained beholden to the logic of the two hands, fated to be half in obscure shadows, half in brilliant clouds.

If *Kokinwakashû* plays a role in such shifts and outcomes, it is because it structures the operations of couples and doubles, beginning with the tip of the brush feeling its way through the realm of sensible forms, rendering them visible and intelligible. The poetic shift from seeing to feeling/thinking conjures up the new ways of the brush—the traces of the hand that emerge from, and retreat into, shadows and billows—like the ink trails that arise upon, and twine with, the whirls, flecks, and figures of the fantastical paperscape. The brush thus "sees" the world in two ways at once, in terms of sensible forms (and the sensibility they affect) and in terms of intelligible forms (and the intelligence they effect). The feeling/thinking of *omohu* entails a kind of double vision, in which visible forms constantly play between two moments, sensible and intelligible.

The synthetic art of *Kokinwakashû* begins with this doubleness, finding it and following it wherever it arises—within forms, characters, words, sea-

sons, emotions, eras—and then, by locating and aligning these doubles, its poetics brings order to the forces that move between them. Ki no Tsurayuki, the chief compiler of *Kokinwakashû,* writes in his preface, "Song is what moves heavens and earth without applying force, draws out the feelings of unseen spirits of the dead, soothes between man and woman, and calms the hearts of fierce warriors." Note that Tsurayuki presumes the natural, cosmological existence of certain asymmetries, and song does not apply force to these asymmetries but directs or channels force between them.

In sum, the synthetic moment of *Kokinwakashû* entails doubles and couples that implicate specific forms and forces (asymmetries). In order to explore the functions and effects of this synthetic logic of forms and forces, one would need to take Ki no Tsurayuki at his word, albeit obliquely: Human circulation and interaction at the Heian court needed poetry and calligraphy to give it consistency. This is to say, the ranks, bureaucracies, alliances, and genealogies were, in many ways, far too aleatory to ground a stable order. At a certain point, everyone was related to everyone else, and there were too many titular dispensations and alternative ranks. The role of *waka* poetics, at the heart of the Heian order, was to open the social order into the cosmological order, and in the final analysis, it was the cosmological order that assured the stability and longevity of the Heian court.[31] It brought about an order of the senses, allowing courtiers to move intelligibly through the realm of sensible forms, aligning the movements of the senses and emotions with the movements of seasons and asterisms.

Notes

1. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communites: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1983), 14, 19.

2. Anderson, *Imagined Communites,* 20.

3. Anderson, *Imagined Communites,* 22.

4. Anderson, *Imagined Communites,* 26.

5. Anderson, *Imagined Communites,* 26-7.

6. Benedict's remarks on polygyny and sanctified miscegenation hint (but only hint) at profound differences vis-à-vis modern forms of sexuality and gender construction. In particular, one would have to question the ways in which the modern nation mobilizes compulsory heterosexuality (as both Michel Foucault and Judith Butler have critiqued it). As for Wilsonian nationalism, I have in mind the explanations of Eric Hobsbawm. After the First World War, the peace settlement made an attempt to redraw the political map on national lines, applying Wilsonian principles systematically to the nations of Europe: national frontiers were to coincide with the frontiers of culture as defined by language. The Wilsonian principles for nations made explicit certain assumptions already built into modern national structures, namely that political for-

mations, cultural or ethnic identities, and linguistic structures should coincide; the coincidence of these established natural, objective boundaries for nations. The Wilsonian world order, however, did not work. E. J. Hobsbawm. *Nations and Nationalism Since 1980: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 133.

7. Japanese history is often delineated into these periods:

Ancient or Early (*kodai*)	Nara	(710-794)
	Heian	(794-1185)
Medieval (*chûsei*)	Kamakura	(1185-1333)
	Muromachi	(1333-1573)
	Momoyama	(1573-1603)
Early Modern (*kinsei*)	Tokugawa or Edo	(1603-1867)
Modern (*kindai*)	Meiji	(1868-1912)
	Taishô	(1912-1926)
	Shôwa	(1926-1989)
	Heisei	(from 1989)

8. Naoki Sakai's study of eighteenth-century Japanese discourse consistently brings the problematic of translation to the fore, with attention to the ways in which translation dehistoricizes artifacts. Particularly germane in this context are his comments on the invention of the speech of *Kokinwakashû* when he discusses Motoori Norinaga. "Of course, there was no national language equivalent to today's *hyôjun kogo* (standard spoken Japanese, or NHK Japanese)," he writes. "Motoori translated *Kokinshû* into a dialect probably unintelligible to Japanese living in other remote regions." *Voices of the Past: The Status of Language in Eighteenth-Century Japanese Discourse* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), 264, n. 27. As Sakai suggests, transcription and translation of the Japanese "classics" has been integral in covering over the recent invention of the national language. Calligraphic editions of *Kokinwakashû,* however, recall the layers of forms that national language would strip away in its attempt to produce a text without formal or material history but only linguistic continuities.

9. These "paperscapes" can be seen in any number of Heian texts. In this instance, I have before me various color plates from the volume *Heian Kamakura no sho: sampitsu sanseki,* ed. Komatsu Shigemi (Tokyo: Gakken, 1980): the *Kumogamibon Wakanrôeishû* (46), the *Gen'eibon Kokinwakashû* (49), the *Oshikishi* (53), and the *Ishiyamagire* (55). See too the Heian and Kamakura volumes of *Shodô zenshû,* 3rd ed. (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1969), which gives a number of articles and commentaries. In this context, the article on paper ("Sôshôshi ni tsuite," vol. 14, 28-34) is of particular interest because it gives the details of the production of papers and paper designs. On the whole, it would seem that there was a concerted effort to mark or pattern paper, to impart orientations to it. This could be related to an attempt to introduce striated space into the realm of inscription and to relate it with the smooth space of paper (see Gilles

Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* trans. Brian Massumi [Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1987], 474-7).

10. I adopt the stance of Jean-François Billeter in *The Chinese Art of Writing* (New York: Rizzoli, 1990). He stresses the proximity of the stiff style (*kaisho*) and current or running style (*gyôsho*) and sees the grass style (*sôsho*) as a different genre. This distinction correlates well with the formal differentiation of *kana* and *mana* in Heian calligraphy.

11. Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 20.

12. Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 21.

13. The issue of Japan and Korea often remains a subtext to Japan and China. But the interpenetration of Yamato with Paekche, Palhae, Silla, and Koguryo should be noted. Of particular interest are recent claims that the Yamato court originates in Paekche (see Hong Wontaek, *Paekche of Korea and the Origins of Japan* [Seoul: Kudara International, 1994]), and claims that ancient Japanese is a form of Korean language (see Park Hyong-Shik, *Nihongo no ruutsu wa kodai chôsongo datta* [Tokyo: HBJ shuppankyoku, 1991]). These links are hotly debated around *Man'yôshû,* in which many of the poets certainly derived from Korean courts. The Korean domain deserves closer attention and analysis with respect to contemporary developments in North and South Korea. Special thanks to Mark Anderson for calling my attention to three articles that complement this study: (1) Kim Hyun Koo, "A Study of Korea-Japan Relations in Ancient Times: Centering on the Taika Reforms and Formation of Cooperation among Silla, Japan, and Tang China," *Korea Journal* (October 1989), 18-27; (2) Song Ki-Ho, "Several Questions in Studies of the History of Palhae," *Korea Journal* (June 1990), 4-19; and (3) Yu Hak-Ku, "Early Historical Relations between Korea and Japan: Some Methodological Issues," *Korea Journal* (June 1990), 45-8.

14. I have in mind the adventures that occur in tales like *Torikahebaya monogatari* (the "transvestism" of a brother and sister) and *Tsutsumi chûnagon monogatari* (in which the male visitor sleeps with the wrong woman), but similar adventures turn up in *Genji monogatari* as well. *Ariake no wakare monogatari* relates these acts most directly to cosmological events, but in general, if things return to "normal" in any of these tales, it is because the ground of gender is cosmological and not biological. In addition, both *Kara monogatari* and *Hamamatsu chûnagon monogatari* introduce Yamato-Han interpenetration into gender complications. Note that I would theoretically differentiate the term "copulation" as I use it with respect to calligraphy from the grammatical "copula."

15. Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 26-7.

16. The *mana* preface to *Kokinwakashû* mentions 905 (the fifth year of the Engi era), but because songs in the anthology can be traced to poetry contests that took place after 905, it is presumed that the date mentioned in the prefaces is that of the edict for compilation; the presentation would have taken place some time after the date of the latest poem, around 920. As for the practice of collecting *waka, Kokinwakashû* has the prestige of being the first imperial anthology of *waka.* Masada Shigeo, however, in "Tennôsei to waka: chokusenshû o megutte," *Kokubungaku:*

kaishaku to kyôzai no kenkyû 34:13 (November 1989), 54-60, suggests that a number of previous emperors attempted collections of *waka,* but, for various reasons (primarily length of reign), such collections were never completed. This can be interpreted in at least two ways. On the one hand, it might be said that *waka* never underwent a dark age but continued alongside Han songs every step of the way, and some might take this as a sign that Japanese emperors never fully capitulated to the Chinese ideal, because emperors were always linked to Yamato songs. On the other hand, it might be said that Yamato and Han forms were never fully separated and opposed, and the efforts to compile both forms points to the continual coexistence of the two. I take the latter position, stressing that the two forms constantly interact; it is precisely because both emerge together that they allow various levels of synthesis.

17. A note is in order on the sources for the general discussion of *waka* rhetoric and history with respect to *Kokinwakashû.* A fairly recent volume of articles covers most of the major topics and problems that attend this anthology: *Issatsu no kôza Kokinwakashû,* ed. Issatsu no kôza henshûbu (Tokyo: Yûseidô, 1987). With respect to the history of *waka,* two works dominate this article: (1) Suzuki Hideo, *Kodaiwakashiron* (Tokyo: Tokyo daigaku shuppansha, 1990), which reworks the entire range of Suzuki's extensive articles on *waka;* and (2) Yoshimoto Takaaki, *Shokikayôron* (Tokyo: Chûôseihan, 1977).

18. The differentiation of *kana* and *mana* are not the major subject of this chapter. But, to summarize a long argument, I would associate *mana* and *kana* with formal differentiations (rather than grammatical or linguistic distinctions), and there is plenty of evidence for this, even etymologically. In formal terms, *mana* would correlate with the stiff style (*kaisho*) and its companion, the current style (*gyôsho*); and *kana* with the grass style (*sôsho*). Among the extant manuscripts of Heian calligraphy, three collections predominate: the *Kokinwakashû,* the *Wakanrôeishû,* and the *Man'yôshû.* The latter two in particular twine *mana* and *kana.* In fact, the latter two resemble each other so much that it seems obvious that *Man'yôshû* was construed as a synthesis of Han and Yamato forms.

19. It is common to differentiate three eras. First, there are the songs of poets from the compilers' generation, roughly from the late ninth and early tenth centuries. Second, there are the poets of the mid-ninth century, represented by the Six Poetic Immortals. Third, there are the songs that seem to be from the late eighth and early ninth centuries, but these are hard to pin down historically. They are often marked anonymous and are said to derive from a line of oral transmission. Many of them overlap with the songs of the late *Man'yôshû.*

20. The *Kokinwakashû* effects not only rhetoric stability (a kind of standard poetic diction) but also thematic stability (such as cycles of seasons and loves). Rhetoric and thematic are, naturally, linked: certain diction applies exclusively to autumn or spring, or to first encounters and later separations. The rhetorical and thematic format of the *Kokinwakashû* derives much from the previous *Kokinrokujô* (see *Shinpen kokka taikan dainikan: shisenshûhen kashû* [Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 1884]), which lays out many

of the same cycles and topics. The first scroll deals with spring, summer, fall, winter, and heavens (*ten*); the second with mountains, fields, paddies, capital, country, residences, people, and Buddhist matters; the third with water; the fourth with love, incantation, and separation; the fifth with miscellaneous thoughts, ornamentation, color, and textiles; the sixth with grasses, bugs, plants, and birds. See, too, Komachiya Teruhiko's overview in "*Kokinrokujô* o yomu: ôchô kago no tsuikyû," *Kokubungaku: kaishaku to kyôza no kenkyû* 34:13 (November 1989), 94-9. I look at this interaction of rhetoric and thematic in terms of the interaction of terrestrial forms and celestial forms. Words or names—as Chinese characters—act as terrestrial-celestial mediator, and the art of poetry and calligraphy is to align the two realms. The interaction of two scrolls of the *Wakanrôeishû* also makes this clear. This format undoubtedly owes its effectiveness to ideas about the uses of Chinese characters that run through Han poetics.

21. Kojima Noriyuki, in *Kokinshû izen: shi to waka no kôryû* (Tokyo: Hanawa shobô, 1976), looks at the legacy of Han song at the early Heian court in terms of an "age of adulation of Han styles" (115). He discusses at length what *waka* gleaned from Chinese poetics, and how *waka* poetics was transformed. Suffice it to say, Kojima sets the stage for a "bicultural" approach to *Kokin waka* (as he dubs it in his English abstract).

22. I make references to the Taoist possibilities of early Japan and *Man'yôshû* in order to disrupt the nativist impulse attached to *Man'yôshû,* but these leads would really demand an entire study. In this instance, I have in mind the connections suggested by Fukunaga Mitsuji in *Dôkyô to Nihon bunka* (Bunjin shoin, 1982), around the burial mounds of the Nara period. In addition, I would argue that the practice of *kunimi,* or "land-surveyance," in the early songs of the *Man'yôshû* derives from general Taoist geomantic practices of following the auspicious lines of terrestrial and celestial forces in order to construct the capital city. Of course, there are several kinds of Taoism, and in this case it would be a matter of general material practices (a taoism) rather than the "philosophical" Taoism of Lao-tzu or the "religious" Taoism formulated in the early T'ang (to use Nathan Sivin's distinctions).

23. Tsurayuki, "Kanajo," in *Kokinwakashû,* ed. Ozawa Masao (Tokyo: Shogakkan 1971), 49.

24. "Poems which use 'never tire of seeing' (*miredo akanu*) are all thought to be of the early or middle *Man'yôshû,"* writes Karaki Junzo. "There is something artless about the usage of 'never tire of gazing.' There is a passionate frankness. It sees into nature, that is, into things like the leaves on trees, the bushclover, the seashore, or the moon, the river. It gazes, fairly entering into things." He continues, "The 'never tire of gazing,' 'pure to see,' and 'gazing recall' of *Man'yôshû* completely vanishes by the *Kokinshû.* The verb 'to see' is hardly ever used." He concludes, "In the *Kokinshû,* the heart-mind (*kokoro*) appear constantly instead of the eye, and feeling-thinking (*omohu*) instead of 'seeing.'" *Nihon no kokoro no rekishi,* 2 vols. (Tokyo: Chikuma shobo, 1976, 1: 45-7.

25. Suzuki, in *Kodaiwakashiron,* relates shifts in views of nature to the cloistered life of nobles behind screens and gardens, whereas he sees *Man'yôshû* in terms of actual scenery (84-5). Yoshimoto takes a similar stance in Shokikayoron (452), though he stresses the fantastical and metaphysical quality of *Kokin* expression (464, 472).

26. As Nomura Tadao indicates, the shift to the concubinage system (with the emergence of the politics of the inner palace) occurs around the time of the shift from Heijô-kyô to Heian-kyô and the attempt to revitalize the *ritsuryô* system. *Kôkyô to nyokan* (Tokyo: Kyôikusha, 1978).

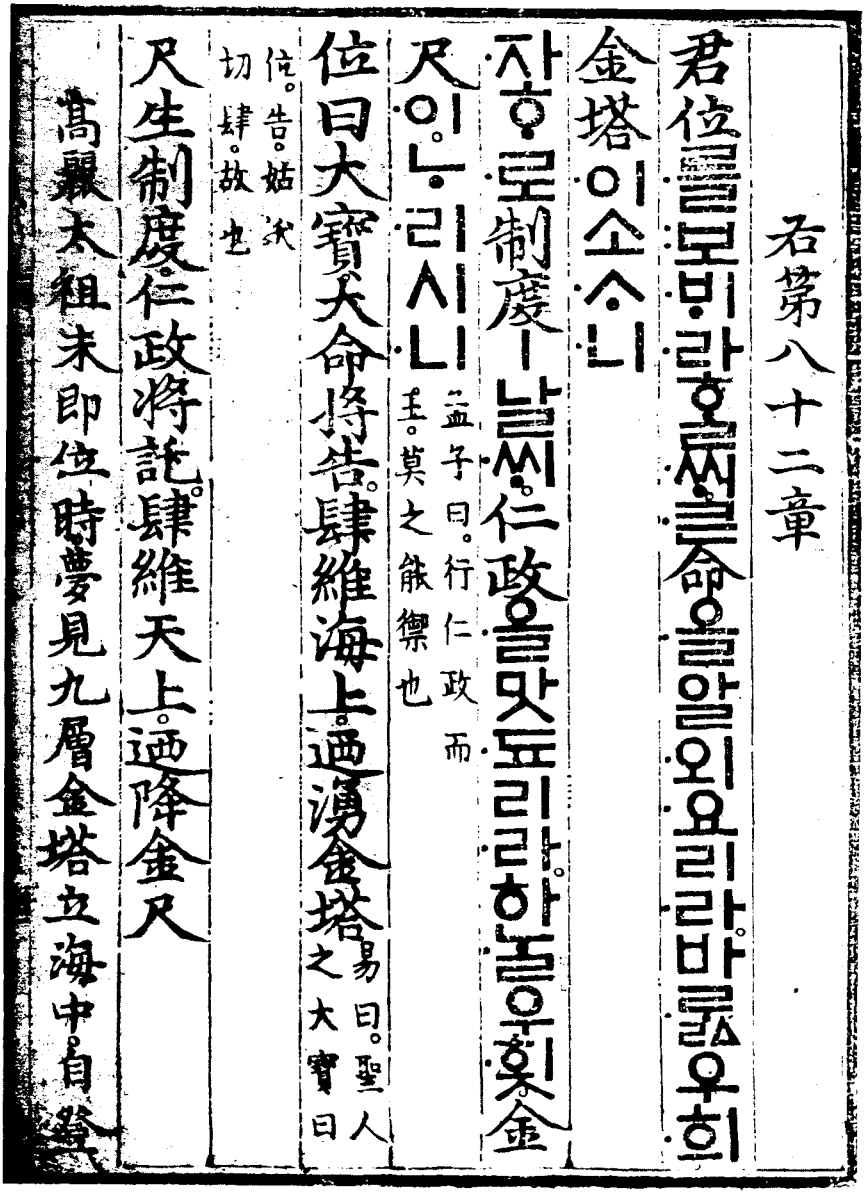
27. The question of why there were so many female sovereigns (six women in eight reigns) in Nara Japan occupies Umehara Takeshi in *Ama to Tennô: Nihon to wa nani ka* (Tokyo: Asahi shimbunsha, 1991). The book is of interest for two reasons: first because Umehara reviews in detail the polity of Nara Japan and the role of women; second because he is so interested in establishing essential differences between Japan and China on this basis. The deviations of early Japan from the *ritsuryô* model of Sui and T'ang China dominates his analysis, and he signals important differences.

28. Mitani Kuniaki, in his analyses of Heian tales (*monogatari*), frequently alludes to the conjunction of seeing and knowing. At the outset of his article on picture scrolls, he gives a brief overview of the simultaneity of certain perceptual modes in early Japanese literature (89-91). "Monogatari bungaku no 'shisen:' miru koto no kinki aruiwa 'katari' no kyôen," in *Monogatari no kenkyû dainishû: tokushû shisen* (Tokyo: Shinjidaisha, 1988), 89-108.

29. Emori Itsuo interprets marriage customs of the Heian period through the accounts in Heian tales, with an emphasis on *Utsuho monogatari: Monogatari ni miru kokken to josei: "Utsuho monogatari sono hoka"* (Tokyo: Nihon editaasukuuru shuppanbu, 1990). He raises precisely this question about the rank and authority conferred on noblewomen through the possession of property, showing how many scholars have tended to see the relation of women and property in terms of women's independence and authority. But he points out that the relation of noblewomen and property was beset with difficulties. In effect, in anthropological terms, we would need to differentiate matriarchal, matrilocal, and matrilineal modes of mediation. See Peter Nickerson, "The Meaning of Matrilocality: Kinship, Property, and Politics in Mid-Heian," *MN* 48:4 (Winter 1993), 429-67; as well as Wakita Haruo, "Marriage and Property in Premodern Japan From the Perspective of Women's History," *JJS* 10:1 (1984), 77-87. In this context, it is important to indicate that there is an important gap between femininity and female sovereignty, property, and authority.

30. I borrow this account from Gary Ebersole's study, *Ritual Poetry and the Politics of Death in Early Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

31. This is a point that often crops up in Francine Hérail's study of the Heian court, in which she looks closely at the intersection of ceremony and bureaucracy, *La cour du Japon à l'époque de Heian aux Xe et Xie siècles* (Paris: Hachette, 1995)



Woodblock of *The Song of the Flying Dragons*, showing Chinese characters next to Korean script.

CHAPTER SIX

Performing *Dragons:*
The Construction of a Korean Classical Moment

David R. McCann

"Song of the Dragons Flying to Heaven," *Yongbi ôch'ôn'ga,* a 125-stanza hymn to honor the establishment of the Yi dynasty, was composed and published in an edition of 550 copies at the order of King Sejong, the fourth ruler of the dynasty and grandson of the founder, General Yi Sônggye. Sejong is a culture hero in Korea, though a historical, not mythical, figure. He invented the Korean alphabet, now known as *han'gul (Great Script)* but originally promulgated in 1446 as *Correct Sounds for Instructing the People (Hunmin chôngûm).* Among his many other accomplishments, the alphabet project has earned him a unique position in Korean history as the sage and wise king, whose intellectual abilities and compassion combined to produce one of the great landmarks in the cultural history of the Korean people.

While Sejong's high status is in part a recent phenomenon, the product of the South Korean nationalist project launched during the decades of the Park Chung Hee regimes (1961-1979), it can certainly be asserted within the field of Korean studies that if Korea has indeed had a classical moment, the reign of King Sejong was it. A recently published garland of encomia, *King Sejong the Great: The Light of Fifteenth Century Korea,* comprises a catalogue of the accomplishments.[1] To list only a sampling from the table of contents: "King Sejong the Great: Bringing Heaven and Earth into Harmony," "Confucianism under King Sejong," "The Korean Alphabet," "King Sejong's Innovations in Printing," "King Sejong and Music," "The Arts under King Sejong," "King Sejong's Contribution to Medicine," "King Sejong's Contributions to the Development of Legal Institutions." Somewhat obscured by the very boosterism that sets out to celebrate them, Sejong's accomplishments, ambitions, and intellectual and artistic range were exceptional.[2]

It will be the purpose of this chapter to bring the *Song of the Dragons Flying to Heaven* into the comparative framework of structural features and dynamics of those other classical moments examined in the present volume. I do not intend to suggest that *Dragons* is itself anything like an exemplification of the normatively classical in Korean literature. Korean lit-

erary scholarship makes no such claim; the *akchang* genre in which the song was composed fell into disuse, and *Dragons* itself declined in favor by the end of the century in which it was composed. Even so, there are a number of themes from other discussions of the classical moment that do seem to have some relevance to *Dragons.* First might be the question of order. Just as Holst-Warhaft observes of fifth-century B.C. Athens, by way of J. J. Pollitt's 1971 *Art and Experience in Classical Greece* and the chapter in Pollitt's book "The World Under Control," Sejong and his predecessors were very much concerned with matters of political control, stabilization of their new regime, and the negotiation of its acceptance among the Korean administrative elites.[3]

Again noting the case of classical Greece, the buildings, town planning, and other concrete manifestations of Athenian power were all part of the project to glorify Athens and thereby consolidate control. One dynamic element that linked and indeed animated those spaces was a concern about language, about words and their performance in the public spaces. Via the notion of the public audience and its approval or consent, Holst-Warhaft argues further toward consideration of the theatrical festivals of Athens as physically and functionally related to the legal and political activities of the city state: "The theater . . . part of a complex of buildings that was within a stone's throw of one another and from the religious and political heart of the city."[4] With the *Song of the Dragons* embedded in King Sejong's Korean language project, and with the song performed at court as part of the state ritual, this public space/public performance aspect of the Greek classical project seems to have a promising Korean parallel. The song was incorporated in court musical ritual in which the musical setting enacted a Korean effort to recover the correct Chinese classical tones for ritual music,[5] while the text sought to link the manifestly heaven-ordained founding of China's Chou dynasty (1027-256 B.C., the "classical age of China") with the manifestly contentious events of the founding of Chosôn.

The central portion of this chapter will be a brief examination of the *Song of the Dragons* and the structures of its argument, followed by a summary of the historical events that the song inscribes. I shall argue that it was the purpose of the song and its performance to obscure those events. Because the Korean song raises prominently the issue of performance, the chapter closes with three comparative examples: a relatively contemporary college graduation ceremony, for its dramatic inscription of the state's authority to make war; Aeschylus's *Eumenides,* for its inscription of the dramatically untrue; and finally, performance of the Homeric epics for the inscriptive reanimation of the author.

Dragons in Context

While Sejong and his alphabet are remembered and celebrated by all Koreans, after a period of considerable popularity, *Dragons* vanished almost completely from the catalogue of Korean literary or cultural accomplishments. It is now accorded a measure of respect largely for its historical significance as the first official deployment of the new alphabet, and is regarded as useful in the field of historical linguistics for its exemplification of mid-fifteenth-century Middle Korean and even more specifically for its inscription of an early difference of opinion and practice in orthography between Sejong and his linguistic advisory committee. As a literary work, *Dragons* is generally viewed as overly didactic, too constrained by its overt objective of praising the founders of the dynasty to achieve literary quality.

A recent edition of the annual university entrance examination review book, *Self Study Manual for Korean Literature,* summarizes this view in the following terms. The song was intended to be a "unifying ceremonial song at the time of the establishment of the new dynasty, to persuade those who actively opposed, and inspire those who passively observed the founding." The manual continues: "But because of its ruling class, privileged tone, after a period of considerable popularity, by [King] Sôngjong's time (r. 1569-1594) it had vanished." The passage from the manual seems to reflect the relatively recent historiographical engagement with the ruling-class provenance of the official historical record. It discovers in the vocabulary of late-twentieth-century Korean pedagogy, in any event, a new way to state an established judgment about the song, that while it possesses some historical significance, its literary value is limited.[6]

The disparagement of *Dragons* on aesthetic grounds overlooks the fundamental and astonishing fact of its existence as the 125-stanza dynastic hymn written in the new Korean alphabet. Until November 23, 1446, the date when the song was distributed in its 550 copies, nothing like it had ever been published. For the modern reader/scholar sorting through candidates for the literary and cultural canons, the song may seem pedestrian, despite its historical significance, but an aesthetic judgment filtered through ideas about the history of twentieth-century Korean lyric verse, or about modern literature, can add little to our comprehension of the song's contemporary impact.

Song of a Dynasty Rising

The *Song of the Dragons Flying to Heaven* is laid out in several major sections. Stanzas 1 and 2 frame the whole with their claim of the cosmological

significance of the new dynasty. Stanzas 3 through 8 describe the actions of Mokcho, Yi Sônggye's great-great-grandfather, Ikcho, the next in the line, and Tojo, father of Yi Sônggye. The story of Yi Sônggye, the founder of the dynasty, begins the next section in stanza 9 and continues through his heroic early deeds to his eventual enthronement, stanzas 78 and 79. A short third section describes the political maneuvering of Yi Sônggye's son Pangwôn, who eventually succeeded his brother to become the third king of the new dynasty, the father of Sejong (stanzas 90 to 109). Stanzas 110 to 124 present a series of admonitions to future monarchs, while the metrically expanded 125th stanza brings the sequence to its conclusion.[7]

The texture of the song's argument is more complex than the general descriptions would suggest. First, as Cho Tongil notes, the balanced, stanza-by-stanza pairings of events in Chinese and Korean history serve not merely to link unequal entities, Korean and Chinese, but to situate a specifically Korean history within the context of an East Asian cultural universalism. Such a framing anchors the Korean narrative within the "universalistic principles of East Asian culture" while simultaneously asserting the "autonomous achievement" of the new dynasty's founding.[8] The song is also a set of demonstrations that the moral authority of the new dynasty was properly verified by precisely the same order of signs and portents as those that had confirmed the proper establishment of the Chinese Chou dynasty (1027-256 B.C.). This cosmological argument inscribes two types of proof. As an accumulation of a series of discrete and independent signs, propitious events and prodigious feats, it affords glimpses, as it proceeds from stanza to stanza, of the emerging heavenly mandate for dynastic change. The song begins with an even broader claim, however, in the iconography of its subject, the six flying dragons. The first stanza is as follows:

> Haedong's six dragons rise in flight,
> their every deed, heaven's blessing,
> the signs the same as the Ancient Worthies.

The six dragons are the founder of the dynasty, Yi Sônggye, his son Pangwôn (Sejong's father), and their four ancestors. Haedong is what might be called a "geograph" for Korea: it combines the characters for "sea" *(hae),* and "east" *(dong),* to mean either the territory east of Parhae—Parhae, located north and west of the Korean peninsula, was the final remnant of the Koguryô kingdom and saw itself as both a descendant of Koguryô and progenitor of Koryô—or East of the (Yellow) Sea *(hae).* The "worthies" are the founders of the Chou state, and the phrase "signs the same" *(tongbu)* meant that the

prognostication for Haedong's six dragons was the same as that of the founders of the long-lived Chou dynasty.

What does this mean? The first stanza claims that in their accomplishments, the six Yi founders and ancestors followed the wishes of heaven in their every deed. This argument is developed to show that the Yi family's actions were not motivated by personal ambition but instead were part of a heavenly plan. To say that the signs were the same as the worthies' is to claim, of course, that Korean events were equal in their oracular significance to the events attending the foundation of the Chou, the idealized classical period of China.[9] Beyond an elemental Sinocentrism, however, a more ambitious rhetorical claim is being staked. The six dragons in flight represent the first hexagram in the *I Ching,* the Chinese *Book of Changes.* Named *ch'ien,* this hexagram contains six unbroken lines, with the commentary "Flying dragon in the heavens./It furthers one to see the great man."[10] Thus the first stanza embodies the claim that the story of the Yi family's rise to power is in and of itself a positive sign of the heaven-ordained rightness of the dynastic change; the rest of the song puts into words and ceremonial performance—re-presents—that heaven-meant oracle.

The rhetorical claim of the first stanza is based on three implicit assertions: The rise of the Yi family through the six ancestors is itself a propitious sign—the *bu* of *tongbu*[11]—for the change they effected; because they acted, or were acted upon, as instruments of cosmological purpose rather than as individuals motivated by merely personal ambition, the Yi's founding of the new dynasty has earned heaven's blessing, *ch'ônbok,* proof that they have received the mandate of heaven; and finally, in possessing the mandate, the Yi founders have played precisely the same role in Korean history as the Chou, which in turn means that the Korean dynasty will be long lasting, a classical model for future ages. (The dynasty lasted from 1392 to 1910.) This last assertion is taken up by the second stanza, which begins with one of the most well known of all articulations of the Korean cultural identity:

> The deep-rooted tree does not tremble in winds;
> its flowers are perfect, its fruit abundant.
> Waters rising from a deep source do not end in drought;
> forming a river they flow to the sea.

The second stanza is noteworthy as the only stanza composed entirely in the Korean language, without any reference to Chinese cultural precedents. It works as a gloss on the first stanza: the propitious omen of the first stanza means that the new dynastic line and the future of the Korean people will be

long lasting and fruitful. The second stanza has also become a pan-Korean symbol of the Korean culture, people, and history. The first phrase, "deep-rooted tree," not only served as the subject of President Park Chung Hee's annual calligraphy exercise in 1973-74, but has given a name to countless commercial enterprises, ranging from liquors (*Ppuri kip'ûn soju*) to publishing (Deep-Rooted Tree Publishing House, Seoul). Exhibitions of Korean art in foreign museums also seem inevitably to have an entryway framed by pillars with a carved inscription of the phrase. The study manual book sums up the general opinion of the stanza as follows:

> Of the 125 stanzas in the *Song of Flying Dragons,* this one can be judged to have the highest literary value of all. The reasons for this are (1), the writing is entirely in the indigenous language; (2), it shows perfection in the clear purport of its distinctive metaphor; and (3), it makes no mention at all of a Chinese classical event.[12]

Having been prepared by the auspicious auguries of stanzas 1 and 2, the song's stage is set for the first appearance of its human actors, the Chinese and Korean dynasts whose every deed was or will be part of the script for a new dynasty.

> The King of Chou resided at Pin Valley
> and there he began the works of the empire.
> Our ancestor resided in Kyônghûng
> and there he began the works of the kingdom.
>
> When he went among the barbarians
> and the barbarians grew unruly,
> he moved to Lofty Mountain
> and this was heaven's plan.
>
> When he went among the Jürchen
> and the Jürchen grew unruly,
> he moved to Virtue Source
> and this was heaven's plan.

The parallel structure of the stanza and argument—the classical, Chou example paired with a Korean counterpart—is perhaps the most obvious feature of these two stanzas; it continues to stanza 110, the first of the "admonitions to future monarchs." In taking note of this structure, commentary on the song often suggests that in some way it explains the song's relative

lack of literary quality. This frequent apology assumes that a literary effect was in fact the intention of the song's composers, yet one need not assume that any literary intent lay behind the actions of King Sejong in commanding the composition of the song, any more than one would assume that a desire to entertain the Korean people and court had motivated the development of the Korean alphabet, clear though it is that literary entertainments did develop as a result. In fact, the *akchang* verse form in which the song was composed was not a verse form used for entertainment, but an established, formal genre of praise-songs, contrasting quite directly with the amusements of the contemporaneous Kyông'gi-style songs, which structurally reinforced their entertainment functions with the light-hearted "Oh, how about that?" refrain that followed each stanza.[13]

If not designed for entertainment, then, when *Dragons* was performed, what precisely was brought forward, or presented? It has been noted that the song was composed to counter the active political hostility of some members of the society to the new dynasty, or to encourage more enthusiastic support among those who remained neutral or indifferent. A brief sketch of Koryô's end and Chosôn's beginning will uncover sources of that hostility and indifference. This hostility or resentment, I propose, is what the performance of the song sought to dissipate as it translated the narrative of events into ceremony.[14]

Ending Koryô

The last decades of the Koryô dynasty were nothing if not complicated, yet the entire enterprise of *Dragons* seems to have been dedicated to making the story seem utterly simple: Koryô declined, the mandate of heaven passed to the Yi family, and a new dynasty was founded. One strand of my engagement with the song is the argument that its actual accomplishment—to achieve, to represent, to be "simplicity"—cannot be appreciated without at least a general sense of that historical complexity. That complexity was part of the contemporary mind-set, part of the frame within which the Yi family and their actions were viewed and judged. That more complex historical narrative was presented in the careful annotations of the song drawn in turn from oral narratives as well as the dynastic records of the first and third Yi kings. Sejong in fact returned the initial draft of the song with orders for further revision of the accompanying annotations, a task that delayed publication and distribution for another two years. What follows is a general summary of a few key themes or narrative strands in late-fourteenth-century Korean history, intended to pro-

vide the general outlines of what the relentlessly placid surfaces of the song might have concealed.

Thirteenth-century Mongol invasions and conquest led the Korean royal family to seek marriage ties with the Mongol royal house.[15] Originally negotiated by King Wônjong (r. 1259-1274) as a way to strengthen the throne's authority vis-à-vis increasingly powerful Korean families, the policy backfired; "son-in-law" statehood reduced the king's authority in ways both figurative—the Chinese character for "loyal" was added to the posthumous names of the Koryô kings to mark their subservience to Yüan (the name of the Mongol dynasty; 1271-1368)—and literal, as for example in the massive tribute payments demanded by the Mongol rulers. Yet the same relationship that afflicted the Korean royal line proved a boon to the Korean nobility, who used their advisory and other positions in the Yüan administration to build power and authority independent of the Korean throne.

Kongmin (r. 1351-1374), the thirty-first king of Koryô, mounted a last-ditch effort to regain power for the throne. As Yüan was being pressed by rebellious forces within China that eventually established the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), Kongmin closed down the Yüan administrative offices, attacked the Yüan headquarters, and, when the new dynasty was declared in 1368, immediately posted envoys. Internally, Kongmin also sought to break the power of the pro-Yüan Korean families through purges of government offices and the redistribution or cancellation of slave and land holdings. Kongmin's efforts eventually led to his assassination and the return to a pro-Yuan state policy.

The founding of the Ming dynasty had left the pro-Yüan elites, those who had accumulated power in the Koryô state and maintained it through Mongol/Yüan patronage or family ties, in a dangerously exposed position, and their political rivals used the shift in Chinese dynasties as an occasion to claim power for themselves. General Yi Sônggye was a military protégé of the "rising new elite."[16] Under orders in 1388 to attack Ming, Yi Sônggye turned back at the Yalu River with his army and marched to the Korean capital. His refusal to pursue the already obsolete pro-Yüan/anti-Ming policy marked a Rubicon-like historical division between the Koryô period and the beginning of Chosôn. The succession to the new dynasty was not completed, however, with that one symbolic move; it took a series of violent acts to force the issue.

In 1388, King U, the son of King Kongmin's principal political advisor, Shin Ton, was deposed and replaced by Shin U's nine-year-old son Ch'ang. Shin U had become king—at the age of eleven—under peculiar circumstances, according to the Koryôsa, the history of Koryô completed in 1451.[17] Shin U's father, Shin Ton, was a Buddhist monk who became Prime Minister Plenipotentiary to King Kongmin. Kongmin was without legitimate heirs, and when

Shin Ton told him about a beautiful serving woman in his household, the king paid her a visit. The woman seems to have already been pregnant, however, with Shin Ton's child, Shin U, but Shin Ton managed to persuade Kongmin and his advisors that the child was the king's, who adopted him. Shin Ton then had the mother killed so that she would not reveal the truth of the matter.

The Koryôsa also records that the reduction of King U and King Ch'ang, his son and successor, to commoner status and their subsequent deaths were carried out at King Kongyang's orders. Kongyang had been placed on the throne by Yi Sônggye and his followers, and the Koryôsa repeatedly describes Kongyang as lamenting his unfitness to be king. He even burst into tears at one point, as he confessed his inadequacies,[18] so it would seem that Kongyang was simply used by the Yi faction to get rid of Shin U and Shin Ch'ang, and when his usefulness to them had ended, he was deposed and banished.

As the Yi faction's power grew, the opposition of the renowned and respected Koryô loyalist statesman Chông Mongju became more noticeably troublesome, and in 1392 the fifth son of Yi Sônggye, Pangwôn, arranged Chông's murder. The elimination of Chông Mongju is recorded in the Biographies of Notables section of the Koryôsa, in an entry whose length seems to reflect the respect accorded him in his lifetime and even after. The Koryôsa was compiled under the Yi, so it is not surprising that Chông is described as the instigator of a plot to kill Yi Sônggye. According to the account, Yi's son Pangwôn tried several times to secure his father's permission to eliminate the threat, but his father refused to approve that drastic step. But at last when Pangwôn came to feel that Chông's continued resistance posed an immediate threat to his father's life—at least according to the account in the Koryôsa—Pangwôn dispatched four or five men to kill Chông at a moment when Yi Sônggye was ill and therefore both vulnerable and removed from the action. When Pangwôn reported the deed to his father, however, despite his serious illness Yi Sônggye rose from his bed to chastise his son for placing him in so vulnerable a position in the public's opinion:

> Now that you have gone off on your own accord and killed the minister, are you trying to say that the people of this land will assume that I knew nothing about it?[19]

One month after the founding of the dynasty, Yi Sônggye designated the first son of his second wife as the heir apparent. A group of government ministers supported the second son. In 1398, Pangwôn, the fifth son of the king's first wife, solved the succession problem by killing Chông Tojon and Nam Ûn, two of the most prominent government ministers involved in the dispute,

as well as both sons of the second wife. Pangwôn declined the throne for two years, placing his older brother Panggwa on the throne in 1399, but then deposed him and occupied the throne himself in November 1400. Perhaps in deference to their father, Yi Sônggye, who lived until 1408, Pangwôn allowed Panggwa to go into exile in an empty palace in the former capital.

Pangwôn's son ascended the throne as the fourth king, Sejong, in September 1418. The new Korean alphabet, the dynastic *Song of the Dragons,* and the completion of the History of Koryô initiated by his grandfather Yi Sônggye were all completed within three years of one another, at the very end of Sejong's reign. The passage from the Koryôsa quoted above, relating the assassination of Chông Mongju, seems almost directly to interrogate Yi Sônggye and his descendants for an account of the moral foundation of their rule. According to that history, the founder of the dynasty had had nothing to do with the murder, while Yi Pangwôn's involvement was presented as the justifiable outcome of his dedicated concern for his father's life. The alphabet project and the song were both prepared by the same committee, who also consulted the state records frequently for their annotations of *Dragons,* so it should not be surprising that the song engages the very same, evidently pressing concern about the violence of the Yi takeover.

Reading Ceremony

The documentation on Korean court ceremony and music is rich, especially for Sejong's reign.[20] The Veritable Records contain the texts and musical settings for a large number of songs, dance suites, and orchestral pieces, orchestral seating, and instrumentation, and even comments explaining the king's own wishes or objectives regarding pieces of music that he is said to have composed himself. *Dragons* was just one of several dance suites composed and performed at court. "The Feng Arrives" comprises five different settings of sections of the song, a part of four suites composed by Sejong in order to commemorate fully the accomplishments and hardships of the founding ancestors. One additional court song—"Reverent Diligence"—and two songs from the dance suite "Founding the Dynasty"—"Harmony and Peace" and "Bringing Peace to the Age"—refer directly to the alleged plot by Chông Mongju to kill Yi Sônggye, and Chông's death as a result of Yi Pangwôn's action. Indirectly, the records seem to confirm that the matter of the succession continued to be unsettled and unsettling, but the performance of *Dragons* would have presented a narrative text in which all was balance and harmony, and where nothing that had occurred during the struggles surrounding the end

of the Koryô dynasty and the founding of the new one was beyond heaven's own intentions. In other words, the song performed a history in or after which there would be no reason to resent the Yi family, nor any motivation for later descendants of those who had lost power, possessions, or their lives in the course of the new dynasty's rising to seek revenge.

This matter of resentment at the new dynasty was not new in Korean history. In 943, the last year of his life, Wang Kôn, reign name T'aejo, the founder of the Koryô dynasty and for twenty-five years its king, composed a series of ten injunctions for the instruction of his successors. Noting that he had labored nineteen years to unite the three kingdoms of Paekche, Silla, and Koguryô, T'aejo wrote:

> But now I have grown old. I worry that those who succeed me will succumb to their passions and forget their discipline. This is a matter of great concern. I have therefore drawn up the following injunctions. They should be studied morning to night and ever after used as a mirror for contemplation.[21]

Following a series of injunctions concerning general matters of government, the state, religious practices, and other matters, the eighth injunction is sharply focused and specific:

> in the territory south of Ch'aryông mountains and beyond the Kongju River, the shapes of the mountain ranges and the features of the terrain are disordered. The character of the people is likewise disordered. If they should manage to work their way into the government or marry into the royal family and seize political office they will bring turmoil and disaster to the country. Or in their continuing resentment at Paekche's incorporation into the unified kingdom, they might demonstrate their feelings and cause disturbances along the routes of the royal processions.[22]

The eighth injunction is a striking admixture of geomantic and political rationalization for the policy of exclusion directed against the people of the southwestern, Chôlla region. Wang Kôn had placed great stock in the advice of the monk Tosôn, whose geomantic expertise, based upon both study of the relevant texts and extensive travel throughout the Korean peninsula, nicely dovetailed with Wang Kôn's policy of controlling the expansion of Buddhist temple lands, lands that as a result fell from the government's tax registers. Wang Kon's second, fourth, and fifth injunctions also refer to the importance of geomantic concerns in state affairs. On the political plane, where Wang Kôn had treated the Silla and Parhae nobles with considerable generosity at their surrender, he destroyed Paekche's capital, Wansan, in 936. As genera-

tions passed, however, the city was rebuilt and named Chônju. The ancestors of Yi Sônggye, founder of the Chosôn dynasty and destroyer of Koryô, started from their home town of Chônju when they began the series of migrations that eventually led the family to Hamhûng, near the east coast. The geomantic prophecy was joined to a political irony when Yi Sônggye restored a descendant of the Wang family to the Koryô throne in 1389: King Kongyang (1389-1392) occupied the throne only long enough for the Yi faction to force his abdication and end the dynasty. Wang Kôn was right, but failed to predict how roundabout the Yi family's odyssey would be.

The matter that seems most to have disturbed Wang Kôn was the lasting resentment—*wôn,* translated in the North Korean edition as *wônhan,* bitter resentment—that he feared would motivate the Paekche people to try to regain the power, privilege, property, and prestige that had been lost first to Silla's partial unification of the peninsula in the seventh century, then finally and forever to Koryô's unification of the entire peninsula in 918. Whether as a direct result of such a reversion, should they regain their lost possessions, or as the product of the Paekche people's desire to cause retributive harm, the result of their return, Wang Kôn predicted, would be disorder and rebellion.

Two comparative examples may illuminate the broader dimensions of this issue. In Aeschylus's *Eumenides,* Orestes, the son of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, having killed his mother in revenge for her murder of his father, is chased down by the Furies, the Erinyes, who demand his death in turn. Orestes asks for the intercession of Athena, who appears and calls for a trial by a jury of Athenian citizens. Apollo next appears, unbidden but offering to argue Orestes' case, which comes to rest upon the question of whether it is a worse crime to murder one's father or one's mother. Apollo finesses the legal argument by asserting that it is the father and not the mother who is parent of the child.

> This, too, I shall set forth, and mark how rightful shall be my answer. The mother of what is called her child is not its parent, but only the nurse of the newly planted germ. . . . And I will offer thee sure proof of what I say: fatherhood there may be, when mother there is none. Here at hand is such a witness, the child of Olympian Zeus . . . O Pallas . . . O Goddess. . . .[23]

This series of assertions, contorted as it may be in requiring the rabbit (Athena) from-a-hat trick to clinch it, nevertheless leads to the resolution of the claims between the Furies, whose duty (and joy, it seems) would have been to exact revenge for the murder of Clytemnestra, and the new Athenian city-state, whose ambition and obligation was to impose order by the rule of law. The argument

makes the woman's body a subject, and also quite literally an object, a container and no more than that for the father's seed. No one hearing or reading the passage could fail to recognize its speciousness, marked at its core by the use of Athena as proof.[24] Yet in the context of performance, it is most unlikely that anyone in the audience would or could have registered an objection. Even the solitary reader who may note the grotesquerie is most likely simply to read on.

There are two reasons for complicity. One is that the course of the play negotiates a state of assent from those who are watching it. One might legitimately wonder if the Athenian audience, given its participation in legal and political debates, would have been as passive as the modern audience.[25] But also precisely because the argument is marked by the rhetoric in which it is embedded, the reader or audience is placed outside the terms of the proposition itself. The argument's frame in effect italicizes Apollo's claim, as if to say *"We all know that what follows is not true, but just for the sake of the play's argument, let us assume . . ."* On that basis, the play moves on to its conclusion, the Furies are translated to the goddesses of the hearth, and through that dramatic interplay, the state's hegemony is reasserted. Thus the negotiation of the particular details of the given issue are made secondary to the negotiation of the state's capacity to represent the issue on a stage in an annual festival.

The difficulties in breaking away from ceremonial occasions were illustrated at my college commencement in 1966, when Robert S. McNamara, the U.S. Secretary of Defense, was presented with an honorary degree. Although a number of classmates stood up and walked out, others in the class found such disruption of the ceremony excessive, despite the disparity between the polite violence being done to the ceremony and the massive violence of the war in Vietnam. The ceremonial nature of the occasion, the difficulty of organizing a protest, and the different readings of it by those who stayed in their seats—from sympathetic glances to loud hisses when the protesting students stood and walked out—attest to the highly charged and powerful atmosphere of the ceremony itself. The local inertia of assent to participate in the ceremony was balanced against the more general issue of the war's morality.

The words of the citation for McNamara were as follows:

> Robert S. McNamara—Doctor of Laws
>
> Robert Strange McNamara, Phi Beta Kappa son of the University of Southern California and the Harvard Business School. You have had nearly complete success as teacher, soldier, and businessman, and at least one failure as a mountaineer.
>
> Now to a position of incredible responsibility, in a situation of unimaginable

> difficulty, and to an unrecognized war of inexplicable dimensions, you have brought a dedicated devotion which inspires admiration for your efforts and awe for your courage. You have displayed an integrity, so unquestioned, that while I would still prefer to go myself, I am willing to trust my sons to your administration, knowing there is an intelligent, intellectual and compassionate human at the helm. It is restorative to have a scholar at the Pentagon, a man who knows force is coercion, and that freedom is captivating. For all this, Amherst salutes you.[26]

The grotesque imbalance between such elegant and lofty phrases and the actual character of war has been worked for its irony ever since Wilfred Owen's "Dulce et Decorum Est." The phrase "unrecognized war of inexplicable dimensions" seems, in retrospect at least, an almost deliberately provocative obfuscation, like Apollo's lawyerly argumentation, challenging, almost taunting the audience to register protest or objection. The written text alone does not indicate the ceremonial event's significance or the contest of assertion and assent that is its real subject.

Representing the King

Performance serves and enacts powerfully hegemonic purposes. At the end of the annual cycle of plays, the members of an Athenian audience were reconfirmed in their citizenship and purged of individual objections or questions concerning the events and issues of the day. Likewise, at the end of the Amherst graduation, McNamara had his honorary Ph.D., Amherst College had reinscribed its institutional links to the centers of American power, and the class of 1966 had received their degrees, while, in the words of the degree citation, the college had stood for the war and saluted.

Whatever else had happened, by the end of a performance of the *Song of the Dragons Flying to Heaven* at the Korean court, in accordance with the self-fulfilling performatives of the opening stanza of the song, the state had reenacted its destined history to rule. The mythic origins of the new state were given historical and retrospective depth (roots) and the prospective assurance of stability and prosperity (branches and flowers). The issue of the new regime's legitimacy, evident concern about lingering resentment for the murder of Chông Mongju and others; acknowledgment of the founding ancestors' difficulties and triumph; the auspicious flight of the six dragons, marking and giving predictive meaning to the history: all of these were transcended or celebrated in performance.

To bring these notes to a close, I cite Gregory Nagy's study of Homer,

Poetry and Performance: Homer and Beyond. Nagy writes:

> Homer is not just the creator of heroic song; he is also the culture hero of the song. Ancient Greek institutions tend to be traditionally retrojected, by the Greeks themselves, each to a proto creator, a culture hero who gets credited with the sum total of a given cultural institution. It was a common practice to attribute any major achievement of society, even if this achievement may have been realized only through a lengthy period of social evolution, to the episodic and personal accomplishment of a culture hero who is pictured as having made his monumental contribution in a earlier era of the given society. Greek myths about lawgivers, for example, whether they are historical figures or not, tend to reconstruct these figures as the originators of the sum total of customary law as it evolved through time. So also with Homer: he is retrojected as the original genius of heroic song.[27]

> The rhapsode, the performer of Homer, is engaged in a mimesis that re-creates not only the characters of heroic song, but also the composer and prototypical performer of that song, Homer himself.[28]

For the purpose of discussing the Chosôn dynastic hymn, one might observe that while the lengthy compositional process of the Greek example is reduced to a decade, it is the same process as the one Nagy describes. Performance recreated not only the characters and events of the dynasty's founding, but also its prototypical performer, the king purged of political stain, elevated beyond questions of pedigree. The culture hero enacted in performance of the song was not Sejong, but the state, which could assert its authority over subjects who gave it, perforce, their loyal service. In this somewhat narrow political sense of the term, the Korean classical moment, the kingdom of heaven-ordained harmony, lasted and lasts precisely for the duration of the performance of the *Song of the Dragons.*

Notes

1. Young Key Kim Renaud, ed., *King Sejong the Great: The Light of Fifteenth Century Korea,* (Washington, DC: George Washington University, International Circle of Korean Linguistics, 1992).

2. For other references, see Robert C. Provine, "State Sacrificial Music and Korean Identity," in *Harmony and Counterpoint: Ritual Music in Chinese Context,* Bell Yung, Evelyn S. Rawski, Rubie S. Watson, ed., (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 2523, n. 10.

3. See Holst-Warhaft, p. 2 of this volume.

4. Holst-Warhaft, p. 5 of this volume.

5. "the complete reform of court ritual and music was a basic obligation of the new regime." Provine, "State Sacrificial Music," 2523, n. 10.

6. Kim Ponggun and Han Yônsu, eds., *Hairait'û munhak chasûbsô,* (Seoul: Chihaksa, 1993), 214-23.

7. For a translation of the complete song with its original annotation and additional notes, see Peter H. Lee, trans., *Songs of Flying Dragons: A Critical Reading* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1975). For another, quite readable translation, see James Hoyt, trans., *Songs of the Dragons* (Seoul: Royal Asiatic Society Korea Branch, 1971). Modern Korean editions include Hô Ung, ed., *Yongbi ôch'ôn'ga,* (Seoul: Chôngumsa, 1973); Yi Yunsôk, ed., *Yongbi ôch'ôn'ga,* 3 vol., (Seoul: Pogosa, 1992), a modern Korean-language edition with excellent annotation.

8. Cho Tongil, *Han'guk munhak t'ongsa,* (Seoul: Chishiksanôpsa, 1994), 7.2.2, 287. For a succinct overview of the song, see 7.2.2, 284-91.

9. See, for example, *The Columbia Encyclopedia,* 5th ed, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 549: "Despite political disorder, the later Chou era was known as the classical age of China. . . ."

10. Richard Wilhelm, trans., *The I Ching or Book of Changes,* (Princeton: Bollingen Series xix, Princeton University Press, 1969), 9. On *ch'ien,* 3-10. Also Lee, *Songs of Flying Dragons,* 110-3; Yunsôk, *Yongbi,* vol. 1, 6.

11. See other compounds, such as *pumyong:* a sign from heaven that someone is going to become king. Yi Kawon and Chang Samshik, eds., *Taejawon,* (Seoul: Yugyông Publishers, 1972), 1128.

12. Ponggun and Yônsu, *Hairait'u,* 214.

13. See Kim Hunggyn, *Understanding Korean Literature* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1997), 64, 133-5.

14. Dispelling resentment is the central function of the Korean popular religion (shaman) funeral rites. For example, from the liner notes of the compact disk *Chindo ssitkim kut,* (Chindo purification rites), #5, *Hon ssitkim kut* (Cleansing rite for the spirit): [The above] "is a rite in which, after the spirit has been placed on the spirit tablet, the deceased person's resentment, fallen like dew, is wiped away with a cloth, and cleansed with fragrant wormwood water." (Seoul: Seoul Records, 1993).

15. On late Koryô, see Carter Eckert et al., *Korea Old and New: A History,* (Cambirdge, MA: Harvard University, Ilchokak for Korea Institute, 1990), 95-9; Ki-baik Lee, *A New History of Korea,* trans. Edward W. Wagner and Edward J. Shultz, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Yenching Institute, 1985), 155f.

16. Willian E. Henthorn, *A History of Korea,* (New York: Free Press, 1971), 134.

17. *Pungyôk koryôsa* (North Korean Translation of Koryôsa), (P'yôngyang: Social Science Research Council, Pre-Modern Studies Section, 1964; Seoul: Tosôk ch'ulp'an shin sôwôn, 1992).

18. *Pungyôk koryôsa,* 4, 480.

19. *Pungyôk koryôsa,* 10, 316-7.

20. See Jonathan Condit, *Music of the Korean Renaissance,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

21. *Pungyôk koryôsa,* 1, 115.

22. *Pungyôk koryôsa,* 1, 117.

23. H. Weir Smyth, trans., *Aeschylus Agamemnon, Libation-Bearers, Eumenides, Fragments,* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 335.

24. See Mary R. Lefkowitz, *Women in Greek Myth,* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 122: "But no Athenian audience would have believed that Apollo's argument was conclusive. . . ." For extended discussion of the Oresteia trilogy, see Gail Holst-Warhaft, *Dangerous Voices: Women's Laments and Greek Literature,* (London: Routledge, 1995), chapter 5, "From the Erinyes to the Eumenides: Tragedy and the Taming of Lament," 127-61.

25. For example, see Gail Holst-Warhaft, chapter 1 of this volume: "The public is not only an assemblage of passive spectators, but is involved in the performance by its participation in the citizen chorus." 3.

26. Amherst College Commencement Program, 1966.

27. Gregory Nagy, *Poetry and Performance: Homer and Beyond,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 76.

28. Nagy, *Poetry and Performance*, 80.

The nun Giac Duyen hovering over the still-dazed Kieu,
from *Kim Nan Kieu* by Nguyen Du.

CHAPTER SEVEN

In Search of Vietnamese Classical Moments

Keith W. Taylor

It would not be difficult to find several classical moments in the landscape of Vietnamese cultural studies, or none at all, depending upon the degree to which one's epistemological wagers are entangled with ideas about classicism. During the past millennium, there have been episodes of Vietnamese textual production that can be associated with visions of classicism used as starch for didactic poses that educated men assumed toward their contemporaries. In these episodes, classicism has the air of an excrescence of male hubris inebriated with the conceit that its task is to enforce order in a world disordered by female flesh. It favors the claims of fatherhood over the claims of motherhood, of authority and obedience over procreation and care, of classical text over vernacular voice.

In Southeast Asian studies, a "classical" age is often imagined to have occurred between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries, when large kingdoms appeared at Pagan in Burma, Angkor in Cambodia, Srivijaya in Sumatra, Majapahit in Java, Sukhothai and Ayudhya in Thailand, and Thang Long in Vietnam. This notion of classicism is based on an echo of modern nationalism and the twentieth-century search for historical anchors with which to affirm Burmese, Khmer, Malay, Indonesian, Thai, and Vietnamese identities. This rather specialized use of the term "classical" in the context of origins for modern national identities is not the idea of classicism I wish to discuss in this chapter.

I am working with an idea of classicism as a moment of textual enunciation utilizing literary forms with varying degrees of openness to vernacular usage, which may depend for their authority upon narrative or formal structure as much as upon a didactic content. It is not always true that the more classical text is in a nonvernacular language. In fact, in eighteenth-century Vietnam can be found several examples of a vernacular poetic form being harnessed to a "classical moment." One striking example of this occurred in the year 1752 when two texts were carved on woodblocks and published. One was a recarving of an old hybrid prose text in Chinese characters (Han) with an interlinear translation in Vietnamese demotic characters (Nom).[1]

The other was an eighteenth-century rendering of the narrative in this text into vernacular poetry using demotic characters.[2] The story is about the coming of the first Buddha to what is now northern Vietnam at the turn of the third century A.D. and reveals the potencies of sexuality out of wedlock and of being a mother. In fact, the vernacular poetic version is more "classical" than the older hybrid Han-Nom prose text. It rectifies the name of the female protagonist to position her in a patriarchal family structure, it affirms that she was the offspring of a proper marriage, it affirms that she was a student of all the authoritative ancient texts, it changes a birth out of wedlock into a miraculous virgin birth, and it features the role and voice of a king who never appears without a supporting cast of rank upon rank of splendidly attired officials. The older nonvernacular prose text, of which this is a poetic translation, assigns this woman an appellation free of any family bonds, does not mention the marriage of her parents and even suggests that she was not the offspring of a conventional marriage, makes no mention of her being literate, clearly indicates that she gave birth out of wedlock, and has a king without any indication of courtly pomp. Here is a case of a hybrid classical-demotic prose narrative having been translated into a vernacular poetic form to produce classicized knowledge about the authority of fathers and rulers.[3]

The value for classical authority of vernacular poetry over hybrid Han-Nom prose is that it speaks from inside the demotic idiom without the self-conscious boundary of a hybrid text. "The Tale of Kieu," a work from the beginning of the nineteenth century, is a famous example of this, in particular its canonization as "the masterpiece of Vietnamese literature" in the twentieth century. The classical moment exemplified by "The Tale of Kieu" could be identified with the archive of allusions to prior Chinese works in "Kieu"; it could be identified with the archive of events, social and political, which in the twentieth century conjured the need for a masterpiece of national literature; or it could possibly be the moment in "Kieu" itself when the plot shifts to assert a classical mode of authority.

The first of these possibilities invokes a realm of Sino-Vietnamese erudition. Yet this place is not a unified field of knowledge. It is a landscape of literary debris that defies any assertion of classical centrality. There are provinces that correspond in a general way with various kinds of Confucianisms, Buddhisms, and Taoisms, but most of the voices come from the frontiers between these textual jurisdictions. "Kieu," according to one of its translators:

> is a treasure-trove of classical Chinese learning. A study . . . has identified in it some fifty quotations from the *Book of Odes,* the Confucian anthology of verse; some fifty references to other Confucian classics; some sixty translations or

> adaptations of various Chinese poems; some seventy allusions to Chinese works of fiction; and about twenty mentions of Buddhist or Taoist scriptures.[4]

These quotations, citations, and allusions do not point to a canonical classical moment in antiquity; they are too heterogeneous and diffuse for that. Their referential force is involutionary, not extrapolative. Rather than signs of a prior classical monument, they are signs of authorial prowess, an inventory of erudition, an accumulation of allusive strategies for constructing sites from which poets can voice their aesthetic and moral visions adorned with the full legitimizing power of the linguistic conventions available to them.

A presumed connection between a "classical Chinese" origin or source and a derivative Vietnamese version is a stitch in time that mends the rags of Vietnamese unorthodoxy into the embroidered silk robes of true civilization. Yet this stitch is constantly in danger of unraveling. An interesting example of this can be found at the beginning of the hybrid Han-Nom text published in 1752 mentioned above. It is a text about a famous Vietnamese Buddha written in literary Chinese (Han), the language of scholarship, literature, and government, with a phrase-by-phrase translation into the Vietnamese demotic character script (Nom). The Chinese text begins: "In the time of Tan, beyond the passes, [one] arrived at Luy Lau in Giao Province, the city of King Si."[5] Tan is the Chin dynasty of fourth-century "China." The passes are the mountains separating Chin from "the South." Giao Province is what is now northern Vietnam, and King Si was a local ruler who established a center of authority there. This sentence asserts a direct, inevitable, unproblematic itinerary from the Tan dynasty in the north to the city of King Si "beyond the passes" in the south, implying both a firm, unambiguous material connection, in terms of a physical route and destination, and a more abstract cosmological connection by which the two places are stitched together into a naturally ordered cultural space.

The Vietnamese vernacular paraphrase of this first sentence reads: "In the time of the house of Tan, sightseeing beyond the passes, [one] arrived at the land of Giao Province and Luy Lau the city of King Si." The insertion of the term "sightseeing," traveling for pleasure, wandering from place to place without necessary reference to a destination, loosens the stitch between north and south in this sentence. Here, "arrival" is incidental to a nonlinear itinerary characterized by interest in "sights" along the way; this is in contrast with the Chinese-language voice for which "arrival" is the ineluctable outcome of going beyond the passes, leaving no slack in a snug stitch. The seemingly offhand insertion of the word "sightseeing" as a mark of vernacular sensibilities penetrating the syntax of an authoritative statement in "the classical language"

smudges the line of command from north to south, turns a straight line from China to Vietnam into a potentially circuitous route distracted by local sights. The city of King Si is positioned less as the necessary destination for anyone going beyond the passes and more as a place in the south at which one would arrive in the course of sightseeing.

Even as this text reveals subversion of statements affirming the centrality of another place and another time, so "Kieu's" archive of erudition reveals a repertoire of signs poetic rather than referential. This archive points to the site of discursive irruption around which it has been assembled rather than to an imagined site of classicism from which it has been plucked in the past; its authority is expended on behalf of the poet who uses it rather than of the texts from which it has been extricated. The inventory of allusions is an accumulation of debris, bits and pieces chosen and extracted from a miscellany of texts, and whatever integrity it has as a coherent sign of cultural authority is attached at its point of usage. In selecting bits and pieces of prior texts, the collector/archivist/poet produces something that never existed before, which can be read as extensions of a timeless classical authority only by an act of faith.

With these brief comments, I hope to dismiss any obligation to disperse "Kieu" into the dozens of texts from which allusions in it have been drawn. I believe that these allusions comprise an inventory of authorial virtuosity rather than of classical authority. Any argument that prefers to see these two inventories as one and the same is bound to be on behalf of those who would pull the stitch tight; but I am convinced that the stitch is not only slack but in a constant state of unravelling, because the vernacular voice mimics the vision of classical authority only to subvert it.[6]

I will now turn to the moment when "Kieu" was positioned as the classic of Vietnamese literature, in the 1920s. In the third decade of the twentieth century, after an unexpected episode of popular unrest, French colonial policymakers reluctantly admitted that Vietnamese would not abandon their language to become French-speakers and consequently conceptualized a colonial relationship with provision for a Vietnamese cultural space. The need to provide Vietnamese with their own cultural space distinct from the modernizing agenda of colonialism, yet in support of that agenda, focused upon the task of constructing a vision of Vietnamese tradition. A new mandarinate, inspired by conservative potentialities in Confucianism and Catholicism and galvanized by colonial and colonialized scholars and publicists, was assigned the task of overseeing the articulation of "traditional" values by way of imposing discipline and order into a society experiencing the disturbance of colonial

intervention. Confucianized versions of "the traditional" Vietnamese family, village, and society were elaborated and enforced with the full weight of the modern colonial state; constructions of a historical narrative, a religious system, and a canon of literature were also part of this task.

Pham Quynh embraced the French colonial project and its subproject of opening a traditional Vietnamese cultural space. During the First World War, when the French regime in Vietnam was challenged by peasant uprisings, royalist plots, mutinous soldiers, avenging anarchists, and mimicking intellectuals, the need for a cultural site for Vietnamese to find peace with their fate in the modern colonialized world became urgent, and Pham Quynh found his life's work in serving this need. This was both a French need and also a need recognized by conservative members of the Vietnamese elite who viewed French colonialism as the best option in a dangerous and baffling world. Beginning in 1917, Pham Quynh, sponsored and financed by the French regime, edited a monthly journal called *Nam Phong (South Wind),* which became an incredibly successful site for propagating the use of the Vietnamese alphabet and ideas about a Vietnamese traditional culture, particularly the idea of a national literature. Within fifteen years, a younger generation of more radical writers moved the frame of discourse far beyond Pham Quynh's collaborationist scheme, but while they went on to define modern Vietnamese literature, the monument of traditional Vietnamese literature erected by Pham Quynh and his ilk stood firm and continues to stand firm to this day.

Pham Quynh began by introducing translations of French literature to his readers as models for a national literature; his selection of, for example, two works by Corneille, *Le Cid* and *Horace,* placed duty and group ethics above personal choice. He argued that literature is the highest expression of human thought and that it embodies the national spirit; he then went on to assert that "Kieu" was the masterpiece of Vietnamese literature and an expression of the Vietnamese soul, that survival of the Vietnamese nation depended upon survival of the Vietnamese language, which depended upon the survival of "Kieu" as its most potent manifestation.[7]

This faith in a canonized literary work as the guarantee of national culture was based upon the illuminating intervention of French literary criticism. Pham Quynh justified his claims by employing French, meaning universal, methods of analysis, superior to the undisciplined, parochial way Vietnamese were accustomed to read and think about the literary. He discusses vernacular works written in *nom,* the demotic character script:

> As a matter of fact, our *nom* literature is basically very poor, but by chance was able to produce a work of very great worth that can be compared with all the truly great works in the literatures of all other countries.
>
> I say "by chance" because before "The Tale of Kieu" there was no work as good as it, and, furthermore, after "The Tale of Kieu" there has not been any work better than it, so that "The Tale of Kieu" is not a regular product of our country's culture but rather the individual brilliant thought of a genius. Because of this, we cannot use the ordinary criteria of *nom* literature to examine it. We must use the scientific critical laws from the culture of the Great West, and only then can we hope to be able to reveal the unique excellence and demonstrate the precious value of a masterpiece in the national literature of our An Nam.[8]

With its colonial jargon of "Great West" and "An Nam" ("pacified south," a term for the Viet lands coined by Tang Chinese in the seventh century and recycled by the French), this passage positions the appearance of "Kieu" as an aspect of the illuminating mission of French colonialism, revealing to the Vietnamese the literary treasure that in their ignorance they could not see. Also, "Kieu," as an uncharacteristic work of genius without precedent or legacy, is lifted above the usual ways of reading Vietnamese literature and exalted as an almost mystical rendering of the national soul. Pham Quynh instructed the Vietnamese in how to read a national literary masterpiece, and his instructions were derived from the model of French literature. Without French colonialism, "Kieu" could never have been read as the masterpiece of Vietnamese national literature.

Furthermore, without French colonialism, having such a masterpiece would have served no purpose. Pham Quynh featured the glory of "Kieu" in the theme of sacrificing one's personal happiness for the larger good, and in doing so he extolled his own role as a modernizing yet traditionalist collaborator with the colonial power. This invocation of "Kieu" (and Pham Quynh himself) in the guise of "the good prostitute" was controversial, for in fact a prominent reading of "Kieu" prior to the French conquest was that it was a decadent tale of sordid, even pornographic, episodes with no morally redeeming value; what made the work remarkable was its poetic beauty despite its debased contents. Pham Quynh made of the heroine Kieu a figure of spiritual purity despite physical violation, useful for collaborators like himself and also for those yearning for a vision of a national soul beyond the reach of the defiling French.[9]

For the French, "Kieu" was understood as a work that taught moral obligation and filial piety. Eight years before Pham Quynh began his project of monumentalizing "Kieu," the colonial Service of Public Instruction published

"Kieu" in the Vietnamese alphabet with an introduction in both French and Vietnamese by Edmond Nordemann, Chief of the Educational Service, which began as follows:

> In this life, man must view his conduct toward others as a fundamental moral obligation. If he does good, he will receive nothing but joy; if he does evil, he will receive misery. He may not see the results of his acts immediately, but they will appear before his eyes sooner or later. All religions, Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity, Islam, in fact every teaching on earth, is in agreement on this point.
>
> It is with the aim of illuminating this precept that writers of all nations choose models of patriotism and filial piety, of faithfulness to moral obligations and of proper education, to which they oppose the ungrateful and cruel, the dishonest and vicious, slanderers and flunkies, and of these models compose novels for our edification.[10]

Nordemann goes on to list several Vietnamese works that exemplify this agenda, and "Kieu" was one of these works chosen for its presumed salutary effect on public morality.

Pham Quynh's "classical moment" was a time when Confucian values were appropriated by the colonial agenda and propagated in a more virulent and generalized form than had been possible before the advent of the modern state. This agenda of Confucianizing a cultural space reserved for Vietnamese "tradition" involved a more effective subordination of youth to age, women to men, and individual happiness to social obligation than had been possible before French administrative and police organization. These themes of subordination can be found in many Vietnamese literary works. But no work combines this content with such a beautiful poetic form as was achieved in "Kieu." It was its success as a vernacular phonetic utterance, a memorable and memorizable episode in the history of the Vietnamese language, that made "Kieu" a suitable masterpiece for the colonial project.

The positioning of "Kieu" as a "masterpiece," a sacralized text of the Vietnamese soul or genius, enables modernity to enter Vietnamese cultural discourse through the search for and assertion of tradition. The almost messianic image of "Kieu" as the text able to save the Vietnamese from the perils of a modernizing world anchors a "traditional Vietnamese" subjectivity within a narrative of national literature encompassing a traditionalizing past and a modernizing future. When the sacralizing and modernizing rhetoric of "masterpiece of Vietnamese literature" is fastened upon this text, the shifting ambiguity of human experience is displaced into a more-than-human divine

order where history and culture are narrativized, aestheticized, and devotionalized into a moment of intention beyond the grasp of an individual human life, the cultural equivalent of an act of faith. Or, mixing sartorial and market metaphors, with "Kieu" safely tucked into the pockets of their colonial attire, Vietnamese have the tradition necessary in order to purchase their ticket to modernity. If we want to call this a classical moment, classicism both enables and enforces the certitude of identity required by modernizing ideologies.

The story of "Kieu" is a translation into Vietnamese poetry of an anonymously authored seventeenth-century Chinese prose novel. The translation is very faithful in all the details of plot, personal names, and even the place names in China. The novel is ostensibly in a genre of "scholar and beauty" stories in which educated and cultured young people find love and happiness, but it is unusual in that the conventional Confucianist plot breaks open and the heroine, Kieu, enters a different plot of karmic suffering and atonement, lurching from one disaster to another, lost in a Buddhist/Taoist realm of suffering, violence, degradation, and spiritual longing. Eventually finding peace and spiritual closure in that story, Kieu is then brought back into the first plot for a conventional "scholar and beauty" closure.[11] The moment when Kieu is unwillingly forced to leave the story in which she had finally found personal happiness and to reenter the story in which she was compelled to resume what others insisted were her social obligations can be read as "the classical moment" in the work.

The work begins with Kieu and Kim, young beauty and young scholar, falling in love and pledging their fidelity. But then violence and chaos break into the plot and Kieu is obliged to sell herself in order to save her father. Separated from her family and her first love, Kim, she is coerced into prostitution; eventually "saved" by a weak-willed young scholar, she is then entrapped and persecuted by his strong-minded wife. Escaping, she cannot avoid resuming the life of a prostitute until rescued by a rebel leader who makes her his queen. Her scruples of loyalty to the emperor result in her persuading her hero to surrender to imperial forces, but she is deceived and her man is killed, and she herself given in marriage to a tribal chieftain. She attempts to kill herself by drowning but is rescued by the nun Giac Duyen who has appeared periodically as a voice of friendship and spiritual solace.

Alerted by a prophetess named Tam Hop, Giac Duyen had settled in a hut beside the river where Kieu was destined to seek death; she hired two fishermen and waited for years with a net spread from bank to bank. When Kieu was eventually pulled into the fishermen's boat and the arms of Giac Duyen,

she remained "immersed in heavy sleep," and the poet reveals to the reader what passes through her unconscious mind: an encounter with Dam Tien, a famous, beautiful, and talented prostitute whose untended grave Kieu encountered at the very beginning of the tale. Kieu had been deeply moved by her discovery of the grave and the realization of whose it was; she felt a kinship with Dam Tien as someone with beauty and talent but a dismal fate. Dam Tien had subsequently appeared to Kieu in a dream to announce that Kieu's name had been entered in the Book of the Damned. Now, pulled from the river and lying in the arms of Giac Duyen, Kieu is visited again by Dam Tien, who announces that Kieu's name has been removed from the Book of the Damned.

The sisterhood linking Dam Tien, Kieu, Giac Duyen, and Tam Hop operates as a source of knowledge and redemption and points to a sense of closure achieved when Kieu awakens to recognize her old friend Giac Duyen:

> Seeing each other gave joy in hundreds of ways,
> No sooner was the boat tied up than she was led in honor
> to the thatched hut.
> One house, all things shared in common from early to late;
> Wind and moon cooled faces, salt and vegetables cleansed flesh.
> In all four directions spread a vast immensity;
> The tides rose early in the day, clouds were reflected upstream and down.
> Former calamities were washed clean away without leaving a trace.
> Former bonds could not yet easily know where was this place.[12]

Except for the last line, this passage could have served to achieve closure within what ultimately appears as a subplot of redemption through sisterhood. But the tale goes on to narrate how the "former bonds" eventually find "this place" and force Kieu out of the story that brought her to "this place" and into the initial story that moves inexorably to the conventional "place" of family and social obligations. It is Kieu's reluctance to leave "this place," the realm of sisterhood, and to resume her place in a world structured by the authority of men, that lends interest and poignancy to what appears as a clichéd ending.

In the "meanwhile" of Kieu's tribulations, her younger sister discharges Kieu's oath to her first love, Kim, who goes on to a successful career in officialdom, befriending Kieu's brother and protecting her parents. But Kim never stops grieving for Kieu and, after years of searching, finds her with Giac Duyen in the thatched hut. There follow a series of arguments between Kieu and Kim, Kieu and her sister, and Kieu and her parents, in which Kieu pleads to be left where they found her to live out her days in peace, but they all

prevail upon her to return to the family and to fulfill her old pledge to Kim by marrying him.

First, she pleads her bond of gratitude to Giac Duyen and the nun's vows she has taken:

> This cloister's now my refuge in the wilds—
> to live with grass and trees befits my age.
> I'm used to salt and greens in Dhyana fare;
> I've grown to love the drab of Dhyana garb.
> Within my heart the fire of lust is quenched—
> Why should I roll again in worldly dust?
> What good is that, a purpose half achieved?
> To nunhood vowed, I'll stay here to the end.
> I owe to her who saved me sea-deep debts—
> How can I cut my bonds with her and leave?

Her father replies:

> You worship gods and Buddhas—who'll discharge
> a daughter's duties, keep a lover's vows?

Kieu cannot argue with her father:

> Heeding her father's word, Kieu had to yield:
> she took her leave of cloister and old nun.[13]

Once she has been brought back to the family, she is increasingly pressured to marry Kim. All her arguments against this are to no avail. Kim will not let it go:

> He argued, pleaded, begged—she heard him through.
> Her parents also settled on his plans.
> Outtalked, she could no longer disagree:
> She hung her head and yielded, stifling sighs.

When the marriage takes place, she says to Kim:

> I thought of your devotion to our past—
> to please you, I went through these wedding rites.[14]

The immense sisterly silence and peace of the thatched hut is gone; in their place is a noisy hectoring place that shrinks until, "outtalked," she is squeezed through the rituals of male hierarchy, the classical moment.

The tale ends with one last argument, which Kieu wins: her plea to Kim that their relationship remain platonic and that he honor her vow of celibacy. The poet then signals closure with praise for her "high mind" and a series of moralizing comments that affirm the superiority of an obedient heart over beauty and talent.

What is classical about the procedure of forcing Kieu to leave her life with Giac Duyen to be relocated in the family context where she "belonged"? It is simple enough to observe that Confucianists define family membership as a prerequisite for membership in society; unless you are within the obligations of family relationships, you do not exist as a member of society. But of course, we are not talking about just any kind of family. Here, family means patriarchal authority, and this authority was incapable of recognizing Kieu's desire to stay with Giac Duyen as a possibility, for there was no man in the world of the thatched hut. Is the classical moment always a moment of submission for women and a moment of power or authorization for men?

Maybe not necessarily, but, in Vietnam and many other parts of the world, men with books appealed to textual authority in order to justify their pose as cultural icons. Culture classically understood has tended toward attitudes of male authority and female submission, toward a vision of orderliness and excellence that is gendered with females or female-like beings representing disorder and corruption. This kind of classical vision invariably appeals to texts, to words on a page that can be read by men in a voice of authority. What is ironic is that these texts are often translated into vernacular forms that are more harshly classical than the originals, for the process of translation brings the voice of authority into a particular historical situation where it is harnessed to a specific agenda of social action.

I will finish my discussion by returning to the last line of the passage from "Kieu" I cited on page 125, for which I supplied the translation. I did not rely upon the standard translation of this passage because I believe it represents classicism at work in the moment of translation, and I wanted to provide a more open reading of the original. The last line of that quotation brings closure to a scene in which the poet describes the joy of Kieu living in sisterhood with Giac Duyen. A surface translation of the original looks like this: "bond(s) of old not yet easily know where this place"; I translated this into more idiomatic English as "Former bonds could not yet easily know where was this place." The word I translated as "bonds" means a predestined marriage union: one's fate in the matter of a marriage partner, a predestined decree beyond one's individual likes or dislikes. The line makes a simple statement that this fate that had once been manifest for Kieu did "not yet" easily know where to find her.

The best-known English translation of this line turns it into a question and personifies fate as the man who was searching for Kieu: "How could her erstwhile love know she lived here?"[15] Shifting the abstract concept of fate in marriage into a notion of romantic love reduces the relatively cool mechanism of destiny, which one must suffer, to a compelling personal relationship implying desire and agency. Kieu, rather than being caught in the web of forces beyond her control, is thereby implicated; she is complicit in a relationship rather than the object of a law. A second modernization of this line lies in the reduction of fate to the person of the one she is fated to marry. This personification brings a conceptual category, fate, to ground as Kim, in the specific situation of Kieu's life, and and makes of him an incarnation of her fate and of the classical urge to enforce her fate. Suffering the rigors of fate was not the lot of Kim, the "erstwhile" lover, for his desire represents Kieu's fate.

Finally, what is the effect of turning a declarative statement into a question? Here, it has the effect of implicating the listener/reader in a way similar to how personifying and romanticizing Kieu's fate implicates her. The question elicits from the listener/reader an endorsement of fate personified in the searching lover. With this move, the translation moves into didacticism, rhetorically ensnaring the listener/reader into the classical agenda, bringing this fate-fraught moment to life not only in the person of the searching mate but also in the audience of the poet. Listeners/readers are invited to emotionally join Kim in his search for Kieu, to grant him their vicarious enthusiasm in the cause of bringing proper classical closure to the tale. The listeners/readers are invited to desire that Kieu not be left in peace at the thatched hut, to desire that she be "found" by fate and properly located as a wife in a family setting. Classicism achieves a degree of emotional potency in the vernacular that could never be attained in a nonvernacular "classical language"; translation can be used to magnify this effect.

The English translation I have just critiqued appears in a bilingual edition published in the United States for emigrant communities where young people read Vietnamese literary works in English translation and where the need to enforce what are imagined as Vietnamese values is given edge by the Americanizing environment. In this context, an English translation of "Kieu" that stiffens the beautified closure of "father knows best" responds to such a need.

Culture and language, as affirmations of bounded objects of knowledge, are always colonial. They produce the discipline of hierarchy and control. Amid the rare, random, and obscure events of human experience, culture and language arise in malice and vindictiveness to enforce ritual comportment and to give effect to the desire for a vision of truth, a classical vision. The classical moment arises in each of us whenever we lose patience with the pain of hu-

man growth and want to "go back to the book." The manner in which a society practices tyranny upon itself reveals the degree of patience it can sustain. A test of this patience can be observed in the tyranny of gendered relations, relations so fraught with growth and pain that the tyranny of needing to be in control is more terrible than the tyranny of suffering control, because the tyrant has no way of escape from the illusion of self. There are those who are assigned the tasks of bearing disciplinary marks of culture and language, the disfiguring marks of classical codes, and there are those who assign these tasks.

Notes

1. *Co Chau Phap Van Phat Bon Hanh Ngu Luc,* ms. 818 (Hanoi: Vien Han Nom, 1752).

2. *Co Chau Phat Bon Hanh,* uncatalogued manuscript (Hanoi: Vien Han Nom, 1752).

3. I analyzed these texts in greater detail in "The Confucianization of Vietnamese Buddhism," a paper presented at the Association for Asian Studies Annual Meeting in in Honolulu, Hawaii, April 1996.

4. Huynh Sanh Thong, introduction to *The Tale of Kieu* by Nguyen Du (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), xxii.

5. *Co Chau Phap Van Phat Bon Hanh Ngu Luc,* ms. 818 (Hanoi: Vien Han Nom, 1752), 1a.

6. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 85-92.

7. Huynh Sanh Thong, "Main Trends of Vietnamese Literature Between the Two World Wars," *The Vietnam Forum* 3 (Winter-Spring 1984):101-5. David Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 154-5.

8. Thuong Chi, "Truyen Kieu," *Nam Phong* 30 (December 1919): 481.

9. Thong, "Main Trends of Vietnamese Literature Between the Two World Wars," 105-6. Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial,* 155.

10. Edmond Nordemann, *Kim Van Kieu Tan Truyen,* 4th ed. (Hanoi: Mac Dinh Tu, 1911), 3.

11. Eric Henry, "On the Nature of the Kieu Story," *The Vietnam Forum* 3 (Winter-Spring 1984): 61ff.

12. My translation. Nguyen Du, *The Tale of Kieu* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 140, ll. 2731-38.

13. Huynh Sanh Thong's translation. Nguyen Du, *The Tale of Kieu,* 157.

14. Nguyen Du, *The Tale of Kieu,* 161.

15. Nguyen Du, *The Tale of Kieu,* 141, ll. 2738.

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